

LEGION







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L E G I O N



# LEGION

THE BOOK OF THE BRITISH LEGION

BY BRITAIN'S FOREMOST

WRITERS IN PROSE

AND VERSE



*ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS*

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LEGION



JOHN GALSWORTHY

## MEMORABLE DAYS

### I

**W**HEN that I was and a little tiny boy" certain days were memorable. These were days when my Father's house was full of preparations for a dinner party, and I would be hard at work during all the hours not given up to lessons. First I had to attend the head gardener in the hothouse and the viney, selecting the pineapples and grapes; or from the south wall picking the peaches and nectarines; nor could I on any account be absent when Henry the butler, with two wicker baskets, and my Father, opened the door which kept in that half-nice, funny smell, as of gas and mushrooms.

With my hands in my waist-belt and my legs apart, I would stare up at my Father handling the bottles with extreme care, and with his thin, taper-nailed fingers holding them up to the light. And I used to pretend that I was in a dungeon, and be very careful to be in front when we brought the bottles up. I had also constantly to be in the kitchen, to see exactly what was going to be eaten; and be told: "Now, Master Johnny, don't touch!" I found it advisable, too, to watch the special polishing which

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George the groom would give his buttons, in order that he might take charge of—I forget exactly what.

All this would be in the morning. The afternoon would be even more exciting; for, quite early, my friend, Mr. Sawdy the greengrocer, who had whiskers and such a pale, nice face, and was pleased with my society, and my friend Glover, who could wink, would arrive, beautifully dressed, with white gloves in their pockets (because I saw them), to help Henry and François put the extra leaves in the dining-table, and lay it and the sideboard. Every time I came in to see, the room would look more and more snowy and shining, and smell nicer and nicer of melon and pineapple and flowers; till at last I would say to Mr. Sawdy: “I might have a wafer now, Mr. Sawdy.” And Mr. Sawdy would look round, and hook one out of the box for me, and shake the box a little so that no one could see there was one gone. And I would eat the wafer—nibbling it ever so slowly from one of its corners upwards—they were lovely wafers, and tasted of something in between.

I was not so interested in the flowers, which my Mother would be arranging in the library, and bringing in. I liked the smell, indeed, and the colours, but I felt that they were not serious like the melon, or the peaches, or the wafers. Nor was I interested in the drawing-rooms on these days, because there was nothing there that was going to be eaten; they just looked all shiny and had no one in them yet. Sometimes all the twenty people, except my Father and Mother, would be coming specially—some all the way from London—in their carriages; but sometimes there would be guests staying in the house, especially my Uncle Wally and my cousin Evie.

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On such occasions I would go and see my cousin Evie have her hair done by Adèle. It was nice and almost yellow, and was rolled up on a sort of cushion, very high; I would stand at the corner of her dressing-table and turn over the silver things and read the monograms out aloud, and smell the powder, and look at her neck and think what a lot of neck it was.

Presently she would say: "Now, Johnny, trot along!" And I would go and sit on the stairs, waiting for my Uncle Wally, because I had to see his waistcoat buttons. He had a very large waistcoat, much larger than my Father's, and more white and shiny; and it took up a lot of room on him because he was not tall, only very broad and square; but he smelled lovely and had three more rings than my Father, because my Father had none; and his face was pale and broad, and had twisty little grey moustaches, and a little grey tuft on his chin; his eyes were pale and blue and round—and they pouted at you; and his collar was very high and shiny and had sharp points, very wide apart, and his chin fitted beautifully between them; and when he walked it was like one of our pigeons. He seemed to me a very distinguished man. He played billiards beautifully. I always had to see his waistcoat buttons, because of their being black and white with diamonds in the middle. He had a funny broad ribbon too, coming out of his waistcoat pocket, and some shiny things at the end of it, dangling. He used to tap my chest and tell me to puff it out like a man; but it took me too much time to remember. He used to show me his watch too: it was yellower and fatter and smoother than my Father's, but it could not strike.

I liked my Uncle Wally best when he sat on the terrace and

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drank claret cup, because he let me taste it. I liked to watch his lips too when they made rings of cigar smoke, all blue. He made better rings than my Father, and his voice was interesting to listen to—it had a sort of fat sound. When I had seen his buttons, I had to go and hear my Father say to my Mother: “Now, Blanche, you’ll be late.” My Mother would be beautiful with ear-rings and a curl coming down each side of her neck: they were called ringlets; I always wanted to pull them so as to see them curl up again like my toy snake, only I was not allowed. But I might stand in the doorway so that my Father could not go out without wrestling with me: this he would do very seriously, puffing a little to show me how strong I was, then suddenly slide me between his legs and leave me on the floor.

Then my Mother would push my hair up and say: “Now, Johnny darling, go along to bed,” and I would go by one door, and come back by another before Mademoiselle or Nurse could see me; so as to sit at the top of the stairs and look down into the hall.

I could hear the carriages driving up, and see Henry walking across the hall with a lady and gentleman behind him, and hear him say: “General and Mrs. Grim,” and then he would stand still at the drawing-room door while they all came up, and blew in his ear, one after the other; and he would say—like this: “Mr. and Lady Evelyn Tushby”; “Sir Edgar and Lady Dulane, and Miss Dulane—ahem!” “Mr. and Mrs. Tureen”; “Mr. and Mrs. Tipping, ahem! ahem!” This lasted a long time, and there was ever such a nice loud noise of talking, which made me feel buzzy and excited. Then Henry shut the door and it was quiet.

I knew then they had all come, and that was somehow nice.

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I could see Henry standing all alone down there, and once I saw him put his thumb up to his nose and spread out his fingers and point them at the door. I was very interested. But before I could say: "Henry!" and ask him why, he opened the dining-room door and went in. He always came out again very quickly, and opened the drawing-room door, and said: "Dinner is served."

Then I would stand up and put my head over the banisters, because I had to see everybody properly. It was like the Noah's Ark, only the gentlemen were black and shiny white in front, and the ladies had ever so much more skin than Mrs. Noah, and were wider below; and last of all came my Mother and Sir Edgar Dulane, because he was the tallest of all; and my Uncle Wally was the shortest—only he looked very important, he was so broad, and had the largest waistcoat. And just then Mademoiselle used to say: "*Jean, comme tu es méchant; viens donc !*" and that was all, because I never heard and never saw any more.

### II

When I was eight years old the world began again for one, who, till then, had known nothing of the more glorious flowers in human form—pirates, slavers, smugglers, poachers, brigands, Saracens, Frenchmen, together with those noble British whose pleasure and duty it was to fight against them, year in, year out. I had just had the measles, a disease which expands the soul; and while my spirit was opening, there came to our house the new governess. How old she was I know not—very old, perhaps twenty, but still beautiful; she had broad cheek-bones, bright

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grey eyes, bright brown hair, tight dresses, a nice scent, a romantic turn of mind, and those books of adventure which it was her first duty to read aloud to us, so that we might listen, sucking tangerine oranges, and get well.

That was the beginning of the new world, wherein every tree was a ship in full sail, to whose top-yards one must ever be climbing; every wardrobe and cupboard the bastion of a castle, or a cliff from which one must leap down; every window made so that one might escape from prison (having refused to give parole); every daisy flower and “soldier” on the lawns meant to be plucked, and named Sir Lancelot, Sir Lamoracke (oh! ineffable sound), Sir Tristan, Sir Palamedes—and struck against each other until one, or both, of their heads came off, so that one knew, or not, which was the better Knight. When all life became a dream of the taking of Arab dhows, of British seamen fighting with sharks on open rafts, of cutlasses and jingals, of tournaments, and the storming of castles, and the barring out of schoolmasters, with other delights. When stones and beans and marbles in great numbers, manœuvred upon tables, represented Austrians, Italians, Spaniards, Swedes and what not, while one told oneself a delicious never-ending history of how they killed each other. When soldiers of lead, set up in somewhat close formation, were mown down while performing feats of gallantry, by dried peas from little tin cannons, whose little wires one pulled. When our tabby kitten was named Puck Hotspur Wilfrid Cœur-de-Chat Front-de-Bœuf Fitzurse; and to dress up in chain armour (of knitted wool) was the greatest joy in life. When time did not exist nor weather, nor any persons except in so far as they could be attacked and routed with great slaughter, or captured and

## MEMORABLE DAYS

placed somewhere in the dark. When one never moved without charging, except to climb trees with a cutlass in one's teeth, and all the time loved every one and everything, and only hurt anything by frequent accident.

That was a year bathed in the glamour of imaginary fighting, and—love for the new governess. The summer holidays were dim without her; the day of her return—brilliant August—was one long wandering up the stairs, and one ecstatic jumping down them; one continual rush to assure every one that she was coming, one wide surprise that they were not so excited as they should have been. And then a lurking in the cool hall, and a listening for wheels. They came, rolling, crunching; stopped; and there she stood, in sunshine! A dash from cover of the darkened hall; a leap, so that arms were round her neck and legs round her waist, and all four knotted up together the other side of her. And a hug so furious that something creaked, and she gasped out: “Oh! my darling!” . . .

Those, too, were memorable days—of war and love.

HUGH WALPOLE  
SCARLATT  
A WINTER'S TALE

*The western wave was all aflame,  
The day was well-nigh done !  
Almost upon the western wave  
Rested the broad, bright Sun;  
When that strange shape drove suddenly  
Betwixt us and the Sun.*

THE ANCIENT MARINER

ONE WEEK-ANNE

I

A NNE TRENCHARD saw that tiny reluctant flakes of snow were falling, shining like silver against the pallid sunlight, as the train dragged slowly into the suburbs of Polchester. She had been feeling cold in the train ever since leaving Drymouth, but as was her wont, she sat still and quiet in her corner, her hands folded in her lap. She was twenty-one years of age, slight of body and stature, pale and dark, not telling any one anything.

She had always been reserved, saying but little, and experi-

## SCARLATT

ence had yet further clamped her down. Speaking rarely did any good, she would say. You were safer were you silent. Her aunt had shown her that.

She looked now at the shining flakes of snow with a thrill of pleasure, and her lips even parted for an instant in a smile. She had beautiful eyes, large and brown and deep, and now they were gleaming. She was happy to be back in Glebeshire again. It would be ten years since she had been in Polchester: ten cruel, unkind years. She did not disguise that from herself. Those years had been cruel and unkind because her aunt had been cruel and unkind. Her aunt had been cruel because she did not want her. Nobody wanted her and, on that awful night when her aunt had beaten her, she had proudly realized, as she had lain through the long dark night with her aching body and without tears, that she too wanted nobody.

She would never want anybody again. She would surrender herself—never. Never, never, never!—To no person, no pleasure, no emotion.

And yet here she was happy at the shining snowflakes in Glebeshire. But she didn't know that she was happy. She was so utterly determined to be independent that she could be conscious of no other feeling.

She had chosen these people because they lived in Glebeshire. It had not, perhaps, been very much of a choice. When she had seen that she would sink into shameful fear if she remained with her aunt any longer, and had advertised for the post of governess or companion in the *Morning Post*, she had received three replies: one from an old lady in Chiswick, another from a widower with a family in Liverpool, and this third one, written from Scarlatt,

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Pencom, North Glebeshire. This third one was signed Ruth Landry, and said that Mrs. Landry had a little girl, aged five, who needed a governess. The lady said that it was a lonely place and that there was no entertainment there.

Anne Trenchard knew, of course, where Pencom was—on the sea, fifteen miles from Polchester. The name had shone in her eyes. She had written asking to be taken, and Mrs. Landry had written saying were there references and should there not be a three months' trial. Anne's aunt, who wanted, and had always wanted, her to go away, wrote a reference, and Mr. Babby, the Rector of St. Margaret's, Willesden Green, had written one also, saying that Anne was good and religious, well-educated, and a lover of children. Anne was none of these things, but Mrs. Landry wrote accepting her and saying that she would be met on the Polchester platform by Mrs. Landry's brother.

### II

In spite of herself she was thrilled with some excited anticipation. Although she had never read a great deal, and was badly educated, she realized that this was a situation beloved of the writers of novels, the lonely and ill-used orphan child going out as governess to a strange unknown destination. But she did not feel like the heroine of anything, only like Anne Trenchard, who had a slight cold and was free, liberated at last from her aunt with the mole on her cheek, the creaking stays, and the thin hands with purple veins.

She wondered at herself because she had not seized her freedom before. It seemed an easy thing now to do. But the pain

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and trouble of the ten years had been cumulative. At first, after her mother's death, it had seemed kind of her aunt to take her, when the other Trenchard relations had made no sign. Only old Mrs. Combermere in Polchester, who had been a friend of her mother's, had offered to take her; but Anne had always been afraid of Mrs. Combermere, with her stiff white collar and man's voice and so many dogs. She had preferred the aunt whom she had never seen to the Mrs. Combermere whom she had.

At first Willesden Green had been exciting, part of so great a city and with so many people crowding in it. Then the unkindness had begun and had never afterwards ceased.

It had at first been a negation of kindness rather than anything positive. Anne had felt the dislike and had stiffened under it, and as she had stiffened it had grown. The people who came to the empty, soulless house (empty although crowded with lumber), had felt very quickly that she was a stubborn, ungrateful child, who would never repay her aunt for her wonderful goodness.

The wonderful goodness was a tyranny, a tyranny born of no imagination, dogmatic habit, and chronic dyspepsia.

Anne bore herself proudly, told herself that she did not want affection. She made friends though with a dog from a neighbouring house, a hammer-headed Airedale. The Airedale lay outside her house waiting for her. Then the neighbour went away and the dog was no more seen. She was quite alone after this.

When she was eighteen a young man fell in love with her, a young man with a spotted complexion and a job in a bank. Her aunt, who now wanted in any fashion to be rid of her, insisted that this was her opportunity.

Anne, who viewed the young man with horror, resisted. She

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would have run away, but she had no money, no possessions, no destination.

After this her aunt hated her. She was cruel to her in little ways, and the angular bony servant was cruel too. Then the night came when, in a passionate fury, her aunt lashed at her with a dog-whip, a ludicrous scene in which everything that should have been terrible was comic. But next morning Anne put an advertisement in the paper.

### III

The sight of the Cathedral through the carriage window stirred her deeply, although no one, watching her, would have known it. Those had been as yet her only happy days, the days with her mother under the Cathedral's shadow. Her father had been a canon of the Cathedral, but had died when Anne was four. Mrs. Trenchard had been able to remain in the little house with the gay, bright garden, the house with the chiming silver clock, the water-colour drawings of Rafiel and St. Mary's Moor, the bright upstairs nursery with the Dutch wall-paper. Every one had been kind in those days, everything full of games and sunshine. She had gone to the Polchester High School. There, too, every one had been kind. Then her mother had died and there had not been a penny.

The relations out at Garth would surely have done something had they not all separated. Cousin Katherine had married a lawyer and Cousin Millie a writer. Mr. Trenchard had died. There were many other relations—the Trenchards spread all over England—but they didn't know Anne.



Augustus John, A. R. A.



## SCARLATT

So it had all been, and now, after ten years, Anne was seeing the Cathedral tower again and the houses sloping downwards and the Pol gleaming in the distance—an old life creeping for a moment back again only to show you how everything now is changed.

The train came to a stop with a gentle quivering sigh. The station was quiet and unbustling. Mrs. Landry had told her that her brother was a bearded man, and so at once he was visible to her, standing there on the middle of the platform staring at the train.

He would have been visible anywhere and noticeable in any crowd. There was his height, his breadth of shoulder, his black beard, his loose brown country clothes, his heavy thick country stick, and at his side, motionless, a sheep-dog.

He stood, his legs apart, only his eyes moving.

She lifted her shabby bag from the rack; the man who was sitting with her in the compartment made no offer to assist her. Then, rather breathless, she stepped down onto the platform. She hesitated, then walked across.

“Are you Mrs. Landry’s brother?” She spoke, in spite of herself, defiantly. She didn’t want him to think that she was afraid.

He raised his hat and smiled.

“Yes,” he said.

“I have a box in the van.”

They walked to the end of the train, the dog, indifferent, following them.

“That’s the one,” she said, pointing to it, aware that it was the shabbiest of all the boxes there.

He directed a porter and then, silently, they walked out of the

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station. It was still snowing very gently, but behind the snow there was the golden haze of the winter afternoon. The air was very fresh and severe. The Cathedral clock chimed the half-hour as they walked across the cobbles.

"You left by the early London train," he said. "The one at eleven is more convenient."

She didn't say, what was the truth, that she had wished to leave her aunt's house as soon as might be.

"We have some way to drive, haven't we?" she asked.

"Yes. Fifteen miles. And it's a trap. We haven't risen to a motor-car yet. I hope you won't be cold."

His voice was deep and very melodious. Very kind, too. It was the kindest voice she had ever heard. Her mother, who also had been kind, had had a sharp, rather querulous voice.

She knew that she was going to be cold, but the air was so lovely that she didn't care.

They were standing beside the trap, arranging the luggage.

Then an odd thing happened. She was waiting for him to climb in. He didn't move. He stood, as he had stood in the station, his legs apart, his eyes staring. The dog sat on its haunches motionless beside him.

She waited. There was complete silence now. Inside the station nothing was moving. The snow fell gently and a red rim of evening cloud hung over the roofs of the houses. They might, the three of them, have been sculptured forms. The horse, once and again, struck the cobbles sharply with its hooves.

At last she was driven to say: "Is some one else coming? Is there any one you are expecting?" She did not see how there would be room for any one else in the trap.

## SCARLATT

He didn't move, but he spoke: "The Lord God made this, the sky, the round world and all its glories. And in His time He will come to judge us."

Two people, talking eagerly, passed them. His body quivered. He turned and looked at her as though he had never seen her before. Then he said quietly:

"I do hope you won't be cold. I have a good thick rug."

He climbed up, then turned and helped her. His hands were warm and strong. She had to lean for an instant against him and felt his heart beating like a steady timing measure in iron or steel.

"And the dog?"

"Oh, Hanks will run beside us. It's nothing to him."

"Hanks? That's not a very pretty name for such a lovely dog!"

"The old man who gave him to us wanted us to call him that. It was his name."

They started off.

They were quite silent as they drove through the town. They came down into the market-place which now in the evening was empty. Anne could see on the right, jumping as it were straight into the green evening sky, Orange Street. Beyond Orange Street would be the lanes and fields where so often she had found cowslips and primroses. . . . They turned to the left, driving above the cliffs that ran down to Seatown and the river. This was after the new houses in Seatown, but before the Great War. . . . It was, in fact, the late autumn of 1912.

The country road began; the hedges were dark and thick, and the first stars were coming out.

Hanks ran a little ahead of the trap. Sometimes he would

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stop and examine eagerly the hedge, but for the most part he turned neither to right nor left. A dog, perhaps, without imagination. . . .

"My name," Mrs. Landry's brother suddenly said, "is Lake—L-A-K-E."

"Yes," said Anne. "Are there many people in the house where we're going?"

"My sister; her son Giles, a boy of twenty; her little girl Mary, who is your charge; and myself."

"Is Mr. Landry dead?" asked Anne.

"Mr. Landry left my sister about four years ago.—He is a scoundrel, Miss Trenchard. We hope that he will never trouble us again."

His voice changed in the second half of his sentence. She could feel deep and almost terrible emotion behind his words, emotion that seemed to be greater than the statement warranted.

"Will I find the little girl difficult to manage?" she asked at length.

"Oh, no. Very easy. She's a strange child. She keeps to herself very much. She's old for her years. Perhaps because she's been very much with older people."

To her surprise he put his arm around her, drawing her coat more closely to her. It was so long since any one had made a kindly gesture towards her that she was surprised and rather indignant to feel a little choking thickness in her throat, and her eyes were for a moment hot. And in some way she knew that this man's action was only kindly, with no other motive in it.

"I do hope that you won't find it too quiet with us," he went

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on. "You having been used to London. . . . In the winter it is very quiet. We are not very sociable people and, in any case, in the winter there are very few visitors. And there are no residents for miles. Only a small village at the bottom of the hill."

She smiled in the dusk.

"It isn't as though my London life has been very gay," she said. "I don't want anything except to be let alone."

She had said that more fiercely than she had intended, so she went on:

"That sounds ungracious. I didn't mean it to be. But I have been very unhappy with my aunt. She didn't like me. I think she hated me."

He was holding the reins with one hand. He put out the other and took hers in his. Through the glove she could feel that it was warm and strong. And again she knew with absolute certainty that this act was only kindly and gently protective. She let her hand stay there and went on:

"I ought to tell you that I haven't been quite honest. Mr. Babby, the clergyman who wrote about me, said that I was well-educated and intelligent. That's not true. I'm not well-educated. I don't know anything. But I had to get away. I jumped at the first chance."

"You needn't be afraid," he said. "We're not well-educated either. None of us at Scarlatt. We would be uncomfortable, I think, if you were very clever."

It was almost dark now and the only sound was the clapping of the horse's hooves on the road. After a little while he began again:

"I will tell you something now," he said. "I'm not only not

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well-educated, but I'm not quite normal. When I was a little boy I nearly died from scarlet fever, and after that I was odd at times. Nothing for you to be afraid of, you know. Nobody's afraid of me, but there are hours when the things that other people think real don't seem to me real at all. I can't read because it makes my head ache, and if I think too much I go to such strange places. So I like to be in the open air doing things."

She felt a little uneasiness. Not against him in any way—her kindness towards him was increased—but only because of that vague discomfort that comes to all of us when something out of the mysterious undefined world approaches the known and definite one. Also it was quite dark now, with many stars but no visible moon. The sheep rustled behind the hedges, and the little woods that bordered the roads murmured under a thin whispering wind.

"If it had not been for my sister, Miss Trenchard," he went on, "things would have gone hard with me. I want you to know now, before you have lived with us, that I owe everything to her. She had an unhappy life until her husband left her, but no trouble that she had ever made her less kind and good to me. She is a year or two older than I, and since I was tiny she has been everything to me—mother and sister and friend. If any one were to hurt her, I don't know—it would be bad for them maybe——"

"And the boy. What does he do?" Anne asked.

"He's only twenty. There's plenty of time yet. He's everything to his mother. It would leave her very lonely if he went away. He's young for his age. It wouldn't be good for him if he were on his own entirely——"

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He spoke a little as though he were on the defensive, and she realized that here she was touching some argued question. This family into which she was going was now opening before her. She had lived for so long only with her aunt, and concerned during that time entirely with maintaining her courage and her self-respect. It was as though she had almost forgotten that there were so many other people in the world and that they had their own histories and circumstances. She felt a new excitement and sense of anticipation.

Riding thus through the dark with this odd man to a strange lonely house, she realized that she was committed to an adventure that might be perilous, even disastrous, but could in no event be cruel and lonely as those last ten years had been. . . .

## IV

They were mounting now a hill which was streaked white in the darkness and, turning the breast of it, suddenly received the roll and thunder of the sea. Anne could see nothing, but the rhythm of it changed the world. The thicker dark of hedge and tree against the lighter shadow of the fields seemed to be a defensive wall behind which the sea was pounding. The rolling climaxes were exceedingly friendly to Anne. All her early happy life had been mingled with the sea; all the early exciting adventures had been concerned with the going to it; all the best moments, sunlit, storm-dark, baked hot, windy and romantic had been sea-moments; and for ten years she had been absent from it.

She was returning to a friend, and it was as though there were

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

some personal welcome in its thunder. "Have no fear—I'm glad to see you—I'm glad to see you—have no fear."

"How far is the house from the sea?" she asked.

"Oh, only a mile. Down the hill, across two fields, along a little valley. Do you like the sea or hate it?"

"I love it. When I was a child we used to go from Polchester. Every summer we had a month there. Generally at Rafiel. Relations lived nearby. I knew the name of Pencom very well as a child, but this is a part of the coast that I've never actually been to."

"Some people come in the summer, but not many. It seems to be a part of the coast that people are afraid of, and yet it's very beautiful. Some of the loveliest rock scenery in England. Very wild. Winter times especially. We have some magnificent storms at Ranger Head. Sometimes it's as though the sea were battering at the windows of Scarlatt itself."

They drove on in silence.

"Are we near now?" she asked at last.

"Only two miles more. We shall be at Pencom village in a moment, then up the hill. . ."

She felt him withdraw from her. She could see his face outlined in the light of the lamps. He was stern, staring in front of him as though he were searching the road for an enemy. She did not dare to say another word.

And then, quite hurriedly, she began to talk—nonsense.

". . . Sundays were the worst. They are worse always in the town than the country, aren't they? But in London they're worst of all. Rows and rows of dead houses with every one dead inside, reading the Sunday papers. . ."

## SCARLATT

She was held up by the appearance of the little village, which ran into the dark road to meet them. "The Green Fox" shone with light. A house with a lamp with a pink shade. A dog ran out and barked at Hanks, but discovered that he was known. . . . Then they were in the dark again, climbing slowly up a hill shrouded with heavy trees.

There was no sea now, Mr. Lake said.

"This house has seen great unhappiness. Houses remember things. I hope you'll be happy with us, Miss Trenchard. We all want you to be happy."

"I mean to be," she answered.

He got down to open the gates, and in the little silence everything was gentle, a pattering of leaves, the running of distant water, the rustle of Hanks among the dead stuff in the hedge.

"Oh, I'm sure I'm going to like them," she thought. "I don't know why, but I'm sure I shall."

He led the horse, closed the gates behind them, and they went forward over a drive that was thick with leaves and smelt of laurel. The snow had begun again. She could feel it brush her face.

The house was before them, three windows lit. At the opening of the door a pool of light splashed out, flinging the horse and trap and Anne into brilliance.

An old woman, shrivelled and bony, stood in the doorway holding a lamp.

"Well, Mrs. Codd, here we are—Come in, Miss Trenchard."

He strode forward into the hall, calling "Ruth, Ruth—Where are you?"

The little hall was so dark and so low that Anne bent her head.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

The old woman had set the lamp on the table, but beyond its radius everything was in shadow.

A voice spoke out of the shadow. "Ah, there you are!"

• • • • •

AUTHOR'S NOTE: It should be explained that this is the opening of a novel begun by me some three years ago and then abandoned. I print the fragment because it seems to me to present of itself a small complete picture. H. W.

# RUDYARD KIPLING

## THE ENGLISH WAY

*“The English are the worst advertisers in the world.”*

FOREIGN PAPERS.

“God be with Earl Percy,” said the King,  
“Sith no better it may be.  
But I trust I have within my Realm  
Five hundred as good as he.”

BALLAD OF CHEVY CHASE.

AFTER the fight at Otterburn,  
Before the ravens came,  
The Witch-wife rode across the fern  
And spoke Earl Percy’s name.

“Stand up—stand up, Northumberland!  
I bid you answer true,  
If England’s King has under his hand  
A Captain as good as you?”

Then up and spake the dead Percy—  
Oh, but his wound was sore!  
“Five hundred Captains as good,” said he,  
“And I trow five hundred more.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

“But I pray you by the lifting skies,  
And the young wind over the grass,  
That you take your eyes from off my eyes,  
And let my spirit pass.”

“Stand up—stand up, Northumberland!  
I charge you answer true,  
If ever you dealt in steel and brand,  
How went the fray with you?”

“Hither and yon,” the Percy said;  
“As every fight must go;  
For some they fought and some they fled,  
And some struck ne’er a blow.

“But I pray you by the breaking skies,  
And the first call from the nest,  
That you turn your eyes away from my eyes,  
And let me to my rest.”

“Stand up—stand up, Northumberland!  
I will that you answer true,  
If you and your men were quick again,  
How would it be with you?”

“Oh, we would speak of hawk and hound.  
And the red deer where they rove,  
And the merry foxes the country round,  
And the maidens that we love.

## THE ENGLISH WAY

“We would not speak of steel or steed,  
Except to grudge the cost;  
And he that had done the doughtiest deed  
Would mock himself the most.

“But I pray you by my keep and tower,  
And the tables in my hall,  
And I pray you by my lady’s bower  
(Ah, bitterest of all!)

“That you lift your eyes from outen my eyes,  
Your hand from off my breast,  
And cover my face from the red sun-rise,  
And loose me to my rest!”

She has taken her eyes from out of his eyes—  
Her palm from off his breast,  
And covered his face from the red sun-rise,  
And loosed him to his rest.

“Sleep you, or wake, Northumberland—  
You shall not speak again,  
And the word you have said ’twixt quick and dead  
I lay on Englishmen.

“So long as Severn runs to West  
Or Humber to the East,  
That they who bore themselves the best  
Shall count themselves the least.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

“While there is fighting at the ford,  
Or flood along the Tweed,  
That they shall choose the lesser word  
To cloke the greater deed.

“After the quarry and the kill—  
The fair fight and the fame—  
With an ill face and an ill grace  
Shall they rehearse the same.

“Greater the deed, greater the need  
Lightly to laugh it away,  
Shall be the mark of the English breed  
Until the Judgement Day!”

# WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

## EARL HAIG

**N**O ONE knows as well as I do how far short of the ideal my own conduct both of the First Corps and First Army was, as well as of the B. E. F. when Commander-in-Chief."

That sentence, taken from the last letter he wrote me, throws a fine light on Lord Haig's character. Surely this was a noble utterance, and shows a true humility, coming from one who had gained every experience and served in every appointment requisite for the General Command, and on whom titles and honours had been showered. Resolute and equable in temperament, he had preserved, under the shocks of defeat and disaster and the wearing anxieties inseparable from relations with Allies and Home Cabinets, a composure which could no more be ruffled by adversity than by success.

His life had been given to the study of his profession. Adjutant to his regiment, graduate of the Staff College, chief staff officer of a Cavalry Division in the South African War, he held successively a command in India, an appointment at the War Office; and then, as G. O. C. Aldershot Command, he became G. O. C. First Army Corps of the original B. E. F. On the departure of Sir John French he naturally succeeded him as Commander-in-Chief, and three long years of war left absolutely unshaken the confidence placed in him by the whole military profession.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

At the end of the war, when he was only fifty-six, he disappeared into private life; but being in the fullest enjoyment of his gifts and faculties, and accustomed always to work from morning to night, he could not allow himself to be idle, and he devoted himself to the interests of his less fortunate fellow-soldiers and brother officers throughout the Empire.

During the last year of his life I corresponded with him more frequently than at any other period, and, although I cannot pretend to intimacy with a personality so reserved, I got to know him better than ever before. I had asked him whether he would like to read and comment upon a book on the war on which I was then engaged, and this invitation gave rise to the correspondence concluded by the letter I have quoted, which continued: "But I do take credit for this, that it was due to the decisions which I took in August and September, 1918, that the war ended in November, and thereby, to say the least, saved the Empire very many millions of money! But for that your task as Chancellor to-day would be still more difficult than it naturally is!"

Even the ten years that have passed since the war ended have seen a silent but impressive enhancement of the fame of Haig. It is not for contemporaries to pronounce the successive verdicts of later generations: but we may already believe that he will rank with Wellington in British military annals, and we are sure that his character and conduct as soldier and subject will long serve as an example to all.

# EDGAR WALLACE

## THOMAS ATKINS

O LD soldiers may die, but their traditions are eternal. I doubt very much, if any soldier of the Crimea walked into a modern barrack-room, that he would feel in the slightest degree embarrassed by the spirit of modernity; and, beyond the change of arms and equipment, he would discover nothing novel in the language of the 1929 soldier.

Still would he find the desperate expedients that kit inspections bring into operation; still would he hear bitter complaints about the quality of the canteen beer; and to his ears would come the familiar groan of the old sweat with twenty years' service telling the youngsters how soldiering was soldiering in the good old days.

The barrack-room is insular. The great events of the world pass on and leave no trace of their interest. New words come into the barrack-room vocabulary—strange foreign words with queer English sounds; for it is a fact that every war in which the British Army is engaged brings a few odd words and expressions into the everyday language of the barrack-room. I wonder how many people realize that “bosh,” as indicating rubbish, is an Army word which the soldiers brought back from Turkey. They acquired one or two from South Africa; another couple remain from the Great War.

In one respect there must have been a drastic change. In my

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

day—I first made my acquaintance with barrack-room life at the age of seventeen—the Army was packed stiff with singers. They weren't good singers, but they sang. You heard them every night in the canteen; you heard them every day in the barrack-rooms and passages, warbling sentimentally. But the character of the songs has probably changed, for in the early 'nineties, and for twenty or thirty years before, the supreme favourites were Irish revolutionary songs!

Songs about Ireland have had an irresistible fascination for Tommy, and it is an historical fact that it was to the strains of "Tipperary" that the Old Contemptibles performed their most heroic deeds. But "Tipperary" was a lively tune compared with the more favoured ditties which held the attention of a soldier audience. It was a vital ingredient of most of the songs that we sang in the early days that they should be sentimental, and should deal with poor Irish heroes who had been done to death by the brutal English soldiery. A typical example was "The Young Hero," the refrain of which ran, if my memory serves me:

*To the old British square they marched our young hero.  
"Aim straight at my heart" were the last words he said.  
Exposing his breast to the points of their rifles,  
When the smoke cleared away our young hero lay dead.  
So they laid him away on the hillside,  
Along with the brave and the bold.  
Inscribed his name on the scroll of fame  
In letters of purest gold.  
"My conscience will never convict me,"  
He said with his last dying breath.  
"May Gawd plead the cause of freedom  
For which I am sentenced to death!"*

## THOMAS ATKINS

I have heard this same song sung by request four times in one evening! And it was not amongst Irish troops that these songs were popular. Their most enthusiastic singers were the men of the county regiments, and especially the "London" regiments (the West Kent, Middlesex, 7th Fusiliers, East Surrey, etc.).

I haven't been in a barrack-room for twenty years, but I am almost tempted to go forth on a visit of discovery to learn what has supplanted the sentimentalism of Erin.

The woes and wrongs of Ireland in lyrical form have charmed and thrilled generations of soldiers, and I do not remember one native song that has ever been brought back from any other part of the world.

India has contributed in a very great measure to the vocabulary of the British soldier. Certain Indian words like "rutee" are traditional, and will persist long after our association with India has terminated—as some clever people tell us it will terminate.

I was privileged the other day to read a letter written by an officer to his wife. He was serving under Marlborough, and one passage in the letter rather amused me:

The soldiers complain, and continue to complain. They complain about the food, about the length of the marches—which, as you may well imagine, are long and tedious—about their billets and their duties, and this was spoken of to my lord (the Colonel) whilst we were at dinner this afternoon. My lord said: "When you have had my experience with English soldiers, Captain Wright, you will know that they will grumble on all occasions, and fight all the better for it."

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

A grouseless British Army would be a monstrosity. Tommy grousers, not because he is a soldier, but because he is British and because it is part and parcel of the national character to grumble when things are going well and to be uncannily cheerful when things are going badly. There is a song, "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag." This did not inspire the soldier—the soldier inspired the song. For in adversity there is no more buoyant creature than he. I remember during the South African War that if one were under a roof for the night it was always possible to tell when rain was falling upon the roofless bivouac. From out of the darkness came the melancholy strains of the latest music-hall song—invariably when it started raining on the men who had no shelter but their blankets, the troops sat up and sang.

I am curious to know whether certain little practices in the Army have persisted through the years. Is the square-pushing uniform as popular as ever? I rather doubt it, because the square-pusher depended very much upon the smartness of the pre-war uniform. Khaki is not an incentive to smartness and clothes-pride; and, moreover, the privilege recently granted to soldiers of appearing in public wearing the mufti of civilians must have done away with the master-tailor's perks.

In the days when soldiers wore red coats and blue trousers, the dandy had many opportunities of beautifying himself and enhancing his personal attractions. Square-pushing boots, square-pushing caps, silver cap-badges, and a few etceteras which were distinctly non-regimental, lent him some of the fascination of the male peacock.

When Kipling wrote "Tommy This and Tommy That" he

## THOMAS ATKINS

was putting into concrete form the one conviction which never dies in the Army, and it is that the soldier is despised by the civilian population and that his honourable trade is regarded by respectable people as something to be ashamed of.

It is a curious fact that the Army is very unpopular among the lower middle classes as a profession for their sons and brothers. Why that should be so has been a mystery, but here again the tradition continues. If only the lower middle classes realized the fact, the Army is the real poor man's university. It is to the Army that every young man without a definite profession should be sent to complete his education, to engraft in him a wider knowledge of men and things, and to supply him with a much-needed stimulus to a profession. It would be all to the good of the country if every young man who attained the age of from eighteen to twenty-four, and had not settled down to productive work, should by law be compelled to take the Army "course." This modified form of conscription would bring about a radical change not only in the attitude of certain sections of the population towards soldiering, but in the physique of the nation.

My own impression is that the attitude of the civilian has undergone a very considerable change since the war. That a soldier should not be served in certain bars and public-houses is unheard of in this year of grace, but, strangely enough, the barrack-room view remains that this is still a practice. When, the other day, I invited a man of twenty-one years' service to come to lunch with me at a restaurant (I think he was passing through London on duty), he was aghast at the idea.

"You will get chucked out if you take me there," he said.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

“Everybody knows that they won’t have soldiers in West End restaurants.”

While I confess I expected all the old ideas and notions, in fact the very character of the soldier, to have been burned up in the war, and a new type to have emerged, a visit to a military centre finds the Army just as I left it, and I can pick up the same old soldier that I knew and loved in the days of my service. He has the same dodges for evading work, the same bubbling humour, not less funny because of its dourness, the same simplicity of nature and generosity of soul. The words you might not use in a barrack-room are still tabooed; the man who whistles the “Dead March” is “for it”; still persists the idea, which dies very hard indeed, that the quartermaster-sergeants buy rows of houses on their illicit gains.

One aspect of the modern Army life I find very curious. In the old days one was not allowed, and certainly nobody seemed to have a desire, to discuss politics in the barrack-room. Giving the soldier the vote was one of the most revolutionary steps ever taken in the history of the Army, and for my own part I believed that it would have a most demoralizing effect. There were neither Liberals, Conservatives, nor Socialists in the barrack-room, and politics came into the same category as religion. It was one of the forbidden subjects of controversy. The curious thing is that, even though the soldier is given the vote, politics are still more or less tabooed. Very wisely the Army authorities do not allow canvassing of military voters, nor encourage candidates to address meetings for soldiers only; and the consequence is that, although the vote has come, it has had practically no effect upon the amenities of barrack-room life.

## THOMAS ATKINS

There is a mystery about the British soldier, a mystery which no man has solved. It is the mystery of the mould in which he was cast, and in which every new recruit is hammered. Why is there no variation? Why is this type eternal? What is there in the Army which broadens and quickens a man's sense of humour and creates the corps spirit which is nine-tenths of efficiency?

For the solution, I suppose, one must go back to the national character, and compare the phenomenon of the soldier's spiritual and mental development with the same process which is going on in the public schools, and which licks the biggest lout into the semblance of a gentleman. Certainly, the soldier does not change for the worse. He could not change for the better.

ARNOLD BENNETT

DEBTORS WHO HAVE  
SHORT MEMORIES

HUNDREDS of thousands of men, perhaps more than a million—or two—are going about the streets to-day, under silk hats, bowler hats, soft hats, caps, some spick and span, more giving signs of wear, still more quite shabby or unclean; and hidden within every scalp beneath every hat a whole series of souvenirs live, active or passive, sometimes in eruption like volcanoes, sometimes somnolent, sometimes utterly ignored for a while; but always in existence there in the brain.

Thoughts of the call to khaki and to the fighting, of enlistment or conscription, of the smiles and tears of worshipping women young and old, of the dream of martial glory, of love of country, of the consciousness of a great mission, of the severity of drill-sergeants, of the tedium of barracks, of the loss of personal freedom, of public admiration, of spasms of sudden fear, of the breaking-up of homes, of good-byes and final dispositions before embarking, of false jollity on board, of the gradual disappearance of the English shore!

## DEBTORS WHO HAVE SHORT MEMORIES

Thoughts of the foreign world, of endless formalities, of packed trains, of kit-impeded marches by night and by day, of the first sight of war's stupid and colossal destructiveness, of the first rumble of distant guns, of the first roar of nearer guns, of spasms of sudden fear, of wild, gay inebriation, of cold, of wet, of digging and digging and digging, of duck-boards and trenches, of open-air living and sleeping and insomnia, of front-line trenches, of exasperating fatigue, of creeping and crawling and whispering, of lice and rats and odours of decay, of deafening explosions near and far, of swift transient lights in the night-sky, of counting the minutes, of "going over," of desperate courage which was also cowardice, of meeting the enemy, of shooting or hitting or slashing to kill other human beings, of terror, of greedy abysses of mire, of letters from home describing grief and calamities and catastrophes which it was impossible to prevent or mitigate, of the absence of letters from home, of hints and rumours of conjugal misfortune, of enormous shattering dins, of corpses and bits of corpses, of the supreme horror of gas, of desperation, resentment, hatred, and at last callousness, of the fatuity of murderous orders from on high, of the grandeur of human nature and the baseness of human nature, of orgies in great cities, of pain, hunger, thirst, of transcendent torture physical and mental, of waking from unconsciousness, of wholesale hospitals full of blood and crushed flesh and death itself!

Thoughts of the exasperating, interminable delays of the return, of the consciousness of having been heroic, of the sight of England, of the consciousness of being one of the saviours of England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Empire, of the clinging qualities of khaki, of the apparent impossibility of getting out of

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khaki, of discharge, of the first sensations in a civilian suit, of meeting relatives, wife, sweetheart, children, of the absorption of these in what had happened to themselves, of the effort to reconstitute the home, of the suspicion or the certainty that the home never would or could be reconstituted, of the realization that non-fighters, male or female, would not or could not ever understand what had been the price in agony of being a hero and a saviour!

Thoughts of the grandiose phrases on platforms and in newspapers about eternal gratitude, of searching for a job, of hearing again and again the answer, Sorry, Sorry, Sorry, No, No, No, of official niggling and cheating over pensions and gratuities, of unchangeable politicians, of the self-centred indifference of a so-called great country, of the relapsing into silence, of dead men who once had been living companions!

And how many thousands are there, of a more tragic category, who do go about the streets hardly at all, under any hats at all? Forlorn, disabled men, who are secluded either for long years or for ever, in rooms of homes or in hospital-retreats and hostels, or on disciplined farms—because of the incurable damage which the business of being a hero has inflicted upon them. You may distinguish some of them occasionally, perhaps in cheap blue suits, being taken out for a “treat” by persons who plume themselves upon their benevolence in taking heroes out for a treat. The men of this category have most of the thoughts above imperfectly catalogued. And they have other and even worse thoughts. Thoughts of being cut off from the world in which once they wandered and toiled free, of being cut off from love and ambition and hope for the future! Thoughts of being ever-

## DEBTORS WHO HAVE SHORT MEMORIES

lastingly shackled and hobbled by the sinister hand of destiny! Thoughts of the staggering injustice of chance in distributing the rewards and prizes of life! Thoughts of what they gave and what they are receiving, and of the difficulty of obtaining even what they do receive! Thoughts of the comic side of glory, and of the insufficiency of Empire regarded as a solace in distress! Thoughts of the negation of the idea of God!

And how many are there in a category still more tragic—perhaps not more tragic in their own sight, but in ours: the idiots, the lunatics, the insane, rendered so by the call of patriotism, the force of public opinion, and the pursuit of glory amid pools of blood, lakes of mud, showers of flying metal, an uproar to shatter the senses, consternation, dread, fright, panic, madness! They are “put away,” unmeet for the normal eye. They are imprisoned. “Lifers,” many of them! Of course, they have their moods of sanity, and then, no doubt, they think thoughts more terrible than anything before written.

The number of all these heroes, saviours, victims, the free, the semi-secluded, the secluded, and the imprisoned, is steadily decreasing. Men die. And heroes, on account of the fantastic ordeals through which they have passed, are more apt to die than their unheroic brethren. Their death-rate exceeds the average, and as they die, memories die.

On the other hand, there are millions of human beings who remember nothing because they have nothing to remember. “Kitchener?” they very truthfully cry, “Never heard of him!” They have heard of “the War” or even “the Great War,” but of what the words signify and imply they have no conception. If they think of Ypres, they think of it in terms of Crécy, Agincourt,

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Waterloo, as narrated in school-histories. They see few soldiers, and such as they see are young, smart, proud, and unmaimed. They do not frequent hospitals, neither prisons for the insane.

If "father" is non-existent, owing to heroism, they may never have even seen that mysterious individual. And they cannot be conducted to his grave and gaze on his tombstone, because his grave is too far off, or nobody knows where it is, or his body may be lost or irrecoverably scattered in trifles of tissue and bone over an area of a hundred yards square, so that no military undertaker, however conscientious, could have put it together again for burial.

These youths, of both sexes, influenced by a mighty and immemorial false tradition, have already begun, or soon will begin, to visualize war as "the lordliest life on earth." Or, in the alternative, they are thinking of it as sheer stupidity and are despising heroes as thick-headed, misguided fools. Whether it is worse to idealize war, or to disdain heroes who faced death or escaped death or suffered death, I will not say.

The number of all these millions of ignorant youngsters is steadily increasing. Children are indeed born, and they do grow up.

### III

A few weeks ago an ex-service man wrote to me for advice. While a soldier he had kept a diary of his experiences. His wish was to revise the diary carefully, fill in the abbreviations, and have it typewritten complete—not for publication, but for circulation among all his relatives. He assured me that the diary was as true and as unsparing of self as honesty could make it. But

## DEBTORS WHO HAVE SHORT MEMORIES

certain elders of his family objected to the circulation of the diary among relatives. They argued that to take such a course would be "unpatriotic," because it might set the young against the ideal of military service in any future national emergency.

What was he to do? Act on his own instinct, or defer to the notions of the elders. Would I offer counsel? I did offer counsel. I strongly advised him to act on his own instinct; and I hope that he has done so.

My view is that the more truth is known about war the better for the progress and the happiness of mankind. War is war. Why should we pretend that things are not what they are known to be, and that the consequences of them will not again be what they always have been in the past? I would publish all the facts, and I would publish them all the time. And the more horribly shocking the facts, the more widely would I spread them. And if they shocked the delicate reader, I would exult. They could not possibly shock the delicate reader half so much as they shocked the soldiers who witnessed them and were martyred by them.

War is a crime on the part of the attackers, and the declarers of war are criminals, and should be regarded as such by the whole human race. My estimate of war and its inevitable results seems to be shared by the immense majority of men who know in their souls and bodies what war is and what the aftermath of war is. It is shared also by the greatest soldiers, who have expressed themselves on the subject with vigour and magnificent candour. For instance, Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson.

War is the price paid by entire nations for the wrong-headed patriotism, the false ideals, the ambitions personal or otherwise,

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the blindness, the lack of imagination, the stupidity, and the historical ignorance of their leading statesmen. War will continue as an institution so long as statesmen feel that they can depend upon the willingness of plain people to risk their lives and the welfare of their wives and children in order to try to save statesmen from the effects of political folly. Nothing will destroy the institution of war but the growth among plain people of the conviction that war is a murderous, bloody, and futile absurdity.

Public opinion is more powerful than any statesman or any group of statesmen. And when the public opinion of men liable to be summoned to fight is educated to the point of inspiring them with a resolved determination not to fight, on that day war will cease. And not before.

Hence, public opinion ought to be educated intensively and continuously. It can be educated by constant reminders of the truth about war; and in no other way. The natural tendency of the human mind is towards forgetting. This tendency must be combated. It can be combated by reiterated dissemination of indisputable facts, both military and economic, and in no other way.

Every honest book and essay about war is propaganda against war. The reminiscences, recollections, and revelations of statesmen and of generals; the naïve journals of simple soldiers; the treatises of economics; the brilliant compositions of soldier-poets such as Edmund Blunden and Siegfried Sassoon; the major war novels such as Zweig's *Sergeant Grischa*, Zola's *The Downfall*, R. H. Mottram's *The Spanish Farm*; the mortality tables, the unemployment tables, the taxation tables, the starvation tables, the domestic-tragedy tables, the utter ruin tables

## DEBTORS WHO HAVE SHORT MEMORIES

—all these, and a thousand other matters, should be employed to the end of the education of public opinion. And in addition, those who know but cannot write should talk, talk, and talk. Memory, especially the memory of the unpleasant, is a tender plant. It needs to be watered daily. And, if education is to proceed effectively, watered daily it must be.

### III

Withal, war has occurred. And after ten years and more the consequences of it, in the shape of human suffering, are still with us, and will be with us for far more than ten years to come. We have a natural reluctance to face them. When we receive an appeal for a war charity we now instinctively resent it. We think: "I'm getting tired of this business." When our attention is invited to the existence of some scandal in the treatment of war heroes or victims, we think: "It can't be helped. I cannot interest myself in it. I have my own affairs to see to."

This attitude may be human, but it is wrong; it might almost be termed dishonest in its implications; that important body, the Association of Foreign Bond-Holders, would unquestionably call it dishonest; it is an attitude of default.

If A has given to B a legal bond in return for goods or services or a loan, and undertakes to pay interest on the bond, saying incidentally that B is a grand and glorious fellow, B expects him to pay the interest on the bond—not part of the interest, but the whole of the interest—and to pay it regularly. If A fails to pay the interest punctually and in full, and B reminds him of the obligation, B does not expect A to say: "Oh! But look here!"

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

I'm getting tired of this bond business. The confounded thing is more than ten years old now, and it's beginning to bore me. Have the goodness not to keep nagging." And if A does in fact address B in these terms and acts accordingly, there is a name for A. It is not a nice name, but it is the name that ought to be applied to ourselves should we resent the expression of the grievances, the trials, and the sufferings of military and other victims of the war.

We owe to the United States the biggest money debt that probably any nation ever did owe to another nation. Did we neglect or seek to evade it? Certainly not. We entered into a solemn arrangement to discharge it, over a prodigious course of years. Do we tire of paying the instalments? Do we fall short of the sum of any instalment? Are we ever a day late with any instalment? Certainly not. Our credit is at stake. We pay on the nail, and we are proud of paying on the nail. Are we not an honourable nation, and does not the world agree with wonder and admiration that we are an honourable nation?

But we have some hundreds of thousands of creditors in our own country whose claim upon us ought to have precedence over the claim of the United States. It is not exclusively a financial claim: it is a claim which includes gratitude, respect, loving-kindness and continual care, in addition to money. Are we fully meeting the claim? We are meeting it to a certain extent, perhaps to a large extent, but not fully; and at best we are apt to niggle over it, to be impatient, to practise delay and indifference, so that our creditors are compelled too often to ask and beg as a favour what they should properly be able to demand as a right.

Among disabled and other ex-servicemen to-day there are tens

## DEBTORS WHO HAVE SHORT MEMORIES

of thousands who bitterly feel that they have a grievance against the country which once told them that they were its saviours. Those few who have espoused the cause of ex-servicemen supplicate alms from us for the cause; and we have the effrontery to think ourselves charitable if we give alms, and once a year we decorate ourselves with flowers as a sign to one another that we have given alms. Which is not a pretty spectacle after all! Charity should be no factor in the equation between ourselves and ex-servicemen. We do not wear flowers as a sign that we are charitable to the United States. Nor *are* we charitable to the United States.

A debt is a debt. And a debtor is a debtor. And a debtor who pays his debt in part, partly defaults, and partly makes up the difference in the guise of charity is a—what is he? How shall he be faithfully described? I will not write the word. Better that a thousand ex-servicemen should be overpaid (though they won't be), better that a hundred should extract money and attention from us by false pretences, than that one ex-serviceman should go to bed at night with the sense of a genuine grievance.

ROBERT BRIDGES

THE WIDOW

**W**HENEVER I pass that house  
my heart is in prayer.  
for reverence of the angels  
who are watching there;  
where a widow reareth  
the child that she bore  
after her young lover  
was kill'd in the war.

A bird torn by the hawk  
hath pangs bodily  
and a birth of wonder  
in its agony:  
'Tis man's Gethsemane  
to know his soul riven  
and feel the bleeding roots  
being torn out from heaven.

God speed thee with comfort,  
thou sorrowing one,  
may God give thee great joy  
and pride in thy son!

## THE WIDOW

Thy hope's haunted ruin  
is not to rebuild:  
How shall the broken cup  
with wine be refill'd?

Keep thou bravely for him  
thought of thy morrow,  
and thy beauty for grace  
of thy life's sorrow,  
like a wreathing rainbow  
over thy way thrown,  
sanctifying thy presence  
while thou walkest alone.

1921

LAURENCE BINYON  
HISTORY

**T**REMENDOUS Time holds all, past thinking, past  
Probe of wit, memory's compass, guess or gauge.  
There flows the human story, full and vast;  
And here a muddy trickle smears a page.

Dead driftwood floats where argosies were drowned.  
The best is secret from the world's applause.  
See! gleaners come, with eyes upon the ground,  
After Oblivion's harvest, picking straws.

What is man, if this only has told his tale,  
For whom ruin and blunder mark the years,  
Whom continent-shadowing conquerors regale  
To surfeiting, with glory of blood and tears?

He flaunts his folly and woe in a proud dress:  
But there's no history of his happiness.

MARGARET KENNEDY

# PUSSYCAT PENNEFATHER

**A**T HALF-PAST nine upon an August evening a middle-aged clergyman and his sister were standing exhausted in front of the Duomo San Marco. They had just dined at a cheap restaurant, and they felt replete yet curiously unsustained. The savour of rich, oily sauces, of garlic, and of vinegary wine hung about their palates; their feet ached because the pavements of Venetian churches are so hard; their hands, moist with the heat, were stained red by the guide-books which they had been clutching all day. They would have given much for an opportunity of washing themselves, but they knew of no place where they could do this nearer than the railway station. Their flat in the Giudecca, lent to them by a friend, was so far away that they could never face the journey back for any purpose save that of sleep.

Mr. Pennefather looked at the squat façade of the Cathedral, and at the forest of little tables in front of Florian's, and at the military band which had just launched into a selection from *Rigoletto*. He said, dejectedly:

"I wish that I could refrain from recollecting the Earl's Court Exhibition."

"That's because you are tired," said his sister. "Let us take a

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

gondola and go home. We can hear the Serenade another night."

He could have wished for nothing better than to take a gondola and go home. His friend's flat was airless and insanitary. The mosquito nets were full of holes, and the children on the floor above cried all night. But it had chairs of a sort and a bed on which he could, if sufficiently exhausted, sleep. Being an unselfish man, however, he hesitated. They had arranged to meet some friends that evening, an archdeacon and his wife, who were staying at the Luna. A holiday was, for Miss Pennefather, so rare and unwonted a thing that he was reluctant to deprive her of so much as an hour's extra junketing. At last he suggested that he might go home alone, a proposal to which she could find no explicit objection save that it would demand no self-sacrifice from either of them. So with a little wrangling, in which it seemed that they might not, after all, get away from one another, they parted, and she consoled herself for the extravagance of an extra gondola fare by murmuring something about not buying more beads.

Mr. Pennefather, alone for the first time since his holiday began, swung out across the star-splashed waters of the Grand Canal. He leant back on his cushions, relaxed his aching limbs and sighed with relief. The depression which had pursued him everywhere during the last weeks, though still unabated, was more bearable when he did not have to simulate enjoyment. All his life he had wanted to see Venice. As a young man he had hung pictures in his room of the Cathedral and the Bridge of Sighs. He had collected reproductions of Carpaccio and Titian. He knew the history of the town to the last date. He had pored over books and maps until he knew his way about a great deal

## PUSSYCAT PENNEFATHER

better than many people who lived there. Twice he had been prevented, after much planning and saving, from making his pilgrimage. And now—now that his dream had come true—he was mysteriously disappointed. Somehow it had fallen short of his hopes. He went everywhere. He saw everything. And he was unmoved.

Perhaps he knew it all too well already, so that he missed those divine surprises which are the traveller's reward. Perhaps he had waited too long and was too old to rise above the small discomforts, the crowds, the glare, the mosquitoes, the smells, the oily food and the continual climbing of stone stairs. Perhaps no splendour could have survived the painstaking intelligence of his sister. He wondered whether he had always, in imagination, made this visit by himself. But he did not think so. He had dreamt of floating under these dark bridges beside some entirely congenial but anonymous companion, a person who shared all his passionate delight, but who said very little. A person who listened when he talked, followed where he led, and was never in a hurry.

"Who was it," he wondered, "that I meant to come with? Was it somebody that I have met? Or somebody I hope to meet? Was it a man or a woman? Or was it merely a sort of adumbration of myself? My *alter ego*?"

Among his acquaintances he could identify no such person. He knew no woman intimately save his sister. His friendships were mostly of long standing, made in the days when he had been a Fellow of his college. Now they meant very little to him. He had lost touch with the academic world, for at twenty-seven he had accepted a suburban living in a manufacturing town in

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order to provide a home for his invalid mother. When she died he made no effort to return to a career in scholarship, although a small legacy, lately inherited from an uncle, would have enabled him to do so. He had abandoned those early hopes for too long to make it worth while. His old friends came sometimes to stay with him for a night or two, and were bored. He knew that they found him precise and eccentric, more full of fussy little ways than any don. He guessed that they deplored the ruined promise of his youth. And he never completely enjoyed their company again after discovering that, behind his back, they called him "Pussycat Pennefather."

The gondola pushed warily among a maze of little streets and stopped at a dark unsavoury doorway. Mr. Pennefather's friend's flat was on the second floor, and it was kept in order by a slatternly landlady who lived below and who ascended every morning to make the beds and wash the coffee-cups. For once she did not rush out at him on the stairs with a message, or a flood of garlicky questions, and he was able to make his way up unmolested. The unusual silence of the building struck him queerly. The children in the flat above were unaccountably not screaming. Instead of taking out his latchkey he peered up the stairs, where they wound on into the darkness. The quiet was breathless and uneasy, as though some catastrophe had swept the house. Somebody, just above him, was waiting and listening. And then a little sound of sobbing shook the air, a child's sobbing, low, distressed, and infinitely weary, as though it had been going on for hours. He thought that one of the children must have been locked out, and ran to the upper floor.

A stream of moonlight poured in through the landing-window.

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It fell upon a group of people crouching at the head of the stairs, a group more strange and pitiful than anything which he had ever seen. A woman with the face of a tragic muse was sitting there, her child upon her lap. Close beside her, huddling round her knees, three other little creatures peered about with bright and cautious eyes. The sobbing died away when they saw the stranger, but their mother did not seem to notice him. She continued to stare into the darkness with a regard so calm, so beautiful, so profoundly sad that all his captive self cried out in instant recognition.

"It is she!" he thought. "I have found her."

Very politely he inquired if he could help her, whereat she came out of her sad trance and looked down at him benignly.

"How do you know that I am English?" she asked.

Her voice had the very tones, leisurely but exciting, which he had heard so often in his dreams. He had addressed her in English instinctively, before he had time to wonder who she was. She told him that she had come home that evening to find her children turned out upon the stairs and the door of their apartment locked. The Padrona had turned them out because they owed six weeks' rent. She had no money. She had nowhere to go. Her husband—but here she paused and faltered, as though unwilling to explain any further. Mr. Pennefather was surprised. Sitting upon the stairs amid her brood she had seemed so solitary and so complete that he had hardly inferred a husband. But since her children were many and small this was, perhaps, a little slow-witted of him.

"My husband isn't with us," she explained at last. "He—he left us two months ago, and forgot to tell us where he had gone."

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And then in face of his obvious bewilderment, she added gravely: "He is Albert Sanger."

Mr. Pennefather had never heard of such a person. But he observed a certain simple grandeur in the way she spoke this name, as though it should have explained the whole affair. So he made a little deferential bow and suggested that they should all come to his flat and drink some coffee while he went down and settled matters with the Padrona. She thanked him, gathered her flock together, and descended.

When he returned he found the flat quite full of them. The lamp, which burned very badly, had been so trimmed and set in order as to give a light of pleasant brilliance. The windows had been opened and a cool air blew about the musty room. Mrs. Sanger, enthroned at the head of the table, was making coffee on a small spirit-lamp. Her baby slept upon a cushion beside her. The three elder children sat upon the floor, eating biscuits. In the better light he saw that they were pretty little creatures, in spite of dirt and poor, haphazard clothing. He gave them some chocolate which he had in his pocket, whereat the largest, a sedate boy of four years old, thanked him gravely in English. The fairer of the two girls whispered "buon giorn" and scratched her head, but the other, a ferocious little gipsy, snatched her portion, saying nothing, but staring at him defiantly.

"What does the baby eat?" he asked anxiously. "We have a tin of Nestlé's, I think."

Mrs. Sanger assured him that Teresa had been fed already, and the boy, nodding over his chocolate, explained:

"Her mother feedeth her."

It seemed as though they had been in that room all their lives.

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The cushions in his chair were arranged comfortably so that he could lean back and enjoy the first good cup of coffee that he had tasted for months. A sense of consolation began to grow upon him. He felt that his new friend had entrenched herself, amidst the desperate hazards of her existence, behind some rampart of stoical acceptance. This must be the secret of her amazing calm, and her detachment. She was ready to be told anything, but she had none of the selfish curiosity of a professional sympathizer. He lost no time, now that he had found her.

"I'm disappointed in Venice," he began.

"Yes," she said, "I thought you were. I've watched you setting off in the morning. Nobody starts so early as that if they are really enjoying themselves."

"You've done it all long ago?" he suggested wistfully.

She said that this time she had spent three months without ever going farther than the fruit market. But he gathered that she had been in Venice before, with her husband.

"When first we were together," she explained.

He supposed this meant a honeymoon, and felt a trifle chilly.

"But he hates sight-seeing," she said. "So we didn't go about much. When he was busy working I went and saw the stock things. But I didn't care for them so much as I had expected. I think one needs a companion. But I liked Torcello. Have you been there?"

"We mean to go to-morrow."

"It's beautiful. And there's no sense in it. I can't think why they built that great church there, on a desert island. It seems like a mountain or a tree, as if it had made itself. It must be very old, I should think."

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"It is very old," he assured her. And then he gave her a little history of Torcello, whereat she laughed.

"Now tell me about the glass-blowers and the lace-makers," she said. "You'll do them on the way, I suppose?"

"We had meant to," he admitted.

"That'll fill up your time nicely. But if you want to enjoy yourself you'll only go to Torcello and you'll go in a gondola, and you'll take the whole day over it."

"Very well, I will."

He paused upon the brink of the boldest move that he had ever made in his life. Then he plunged. He asked her to come too.

"To-morrow?"

"With us. We'll take a gondola for the day."

"How delicious!" Her dark eyes sparkled with instant and unmixed enjoyment. "I wonder if I could. Caryl," she turned to the boy, "could you manage if I went out all day to-morrow? Could you look after Kate and Tony?"

"Yesh," said Caryl.

"I'd have to take Resi, of course. But the others would be all right if I left them something to eat. Wouldn't you, darlings?"

"They're ashleep," said Caryl. "Shomebody ought to put them to bed."

"What time is it?" she asked vaguely. "Nearly twelve? Oh, they ought to be in bed. Is this really the key of our flat? How clever you are! I never thought you'd manage to get it out of Signora Radicci. Look! If we carry them up we shan't wake them. You take Tony and I'll take Kate."

She picked up one child, Mr. Pennefather followed with the other, and Caryl sleepily stumped upstairs behind them.

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The room above appeared to be much larger than Mr. Pennefather's parlour because it had less furniture in it. Instead of tables and chairs a great accumulation of miscellaneous objects was scattered over the floor and stored in corners. As they passed through it he had an impression of bright colours, copper pots, a piece of golden tapestry, many little clothes hung up among strings of onions from the ceiling, and a child's train over-turned in the middle of the floor, where he nearly tripped on it. They passed quickly into a tiny bedroom and put the children down, just as they were, upon a large untidy pallet which was its only furniture.

"I won't wash them or undress them now," said Mrs. Sanger. "It would only wake them up. I'll give them a good wash to-morrow."

Caryl pulled off his little shirt, crept into bed beside his sisters, and fell asleep immediately. Their mother pulled a coverlet over them. When she took Mr. Pennefather back to the other room he realized that the effect of colour had come from an enormous shawl which hung upon a chair, half-embroidered with gay flowers. Mrs. Sanger folded it together, explaining that she could make a little money by working for a shop in the Merceria. He then came to a standstill before a paper cartoon which had been tacked up on the wall. He saw that it had been torn out of *Fliegende Blätter*. It was a coarse caricature of an immense man with an immense black beard, which ended in a conductor's baton. Round his feet a little orchestra of fleas were fiddling and drumming away to an arena of empty seats.

"It amused him," explained Mrs. Sanger, glancing at it. "It appeared the week after his last concert in Berlin."

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"Your husband?" asked Mr. Pennefather shyly.

"It isn't like him, enough to be funny, is it?"

"I've never seen him," he said, and hastily explained that he was not musical.

Mrs. Sanger, with a fleeting overtone of grimness, said that he was lucky. She took him to the window, which commanded a more spacious view than that from the rooms below. Their house was taller than the buildings upon the other side of the canal, and beyond the roofs and spires he could see immense stretches of the southern lagoons. A faint light on some small island winked at them across the dark blue desert of waters. Down below, in the well of darkness between the houses, a gondola went by with a succession of leisurely splashes. The shout of the gondolier came floating up as it turned the corner.

"This is Venice!" exclaimed Mr. Pennefather; "I'm in Venice!"

An outbreak of clamour shattered the stillness of the night. An Englishman was arguing about his fare, holding his ground valiantly against a flood of Italian invective.

"That will do," he said. "I have paid you liberally. A 'basantze.'"

Mr. Pennefather recognized the godlike tones of the Archdeacon, who must have brought his sister home. He hurried down to meet them on the stairs in time to hear Beatrice inviting both her friends to peep at her funny little flat.

"You've no idea," she was saying, "how much more pleasant it is than staying at an hotel. We both have a horror of doing things in tourist fashion."

He was unable to prevent the invasion, so he followed them

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into the sitting-room, hoping that Beatrice would mistake the coffee-tray for the remains of breakfast. But his heart sank when he saw that all three were standing quite still, as though they had beheld a Gorgon's head.

"What—what is this?" asked Beatrice.

He peered over their shoulders and saw Teresa lying asleep on the table.

"Good God! She's forgotten her baby!" he exclaimed.

At the same time feet came flying down the stairs and a husky excited voice called from the darkness:

"Did I leave Resi down there?"

He snatched the little creature off the table and gave her to her mother on the landing.

"The lady upstairs," he explained, when he came back. "She came down and had coffee with me to-night."

"Oh!" said Miss Pennefather in a pinched voice.

She knew more about the lady upstairs than he did, but it was not a thing to discuss before the Archdeacon.

Their friends tactfully changed the conversation and spoke of Venice, its beauty, its charm and its antiquity.

"I doubt," said the Archdeacon, "whether so many priceless treasures have ever been collected into so small an area. Not even in Florence is there such a wonderful concentration of beautiful and interesting objects. As I stood to-day, in the courtyard of the Doge's Palace, I shuddered to think of all that Europe would lose supposing some anarchist were to throw a bomb there."

"A what?" said Mr. Pennefather.

"Bomb," exclaimed his sister and the Archdeacon's wife together.

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"A single bumb," continued the Archdeacon urbanely, "would do more damage here, from the æsthetic point of view alone, than twenty thousand bumbs could do in Manchester."

Mr. Pennefather went hurriedly into his bedroom, in order to laugh. As he sat upon his bed in silent paroxysms he realized that this collapse of dignity was part of something that had happened to him during the evening. He also realized, for the first time but quite finally, that he would like to spend a great deal more of his life with people who laughed when they felt like it and less of it with archdeacons.

"If he'd said it upstairs," he thought, "I believe I should have laughed in the fellow's face. And that would have startled them all a great deal more than any bomb."

When at last he had composed himself sufficiently to go back, their guests had gone. Beatrice, with a countenance full of meek displeasure, was setting the room to rights. Nor did she reproach him until the next morning, when they were eating their breakfast. Then she said:

"I'm sorry you're on such very intimate terms with the people upstairs."

"Why are you sorry?" he asked resentfully.

"They aren't nice people at all, by what I've heard. Signora Radicci talks about them sometimes. Of course, I don't encourage her, but one can't help hearing a certain amount. They're musicians, you know. At least the man is. And now he's deserted her. He's gone away with another woman."

"With another woman? For good? Are you sure?" asked Mr. Pennefather with hopeful interest.

"Those children," pursued Beatrice, "are not all hers. Two



Jacob Epstein



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of them are by another wife who is dead, or supposed to be dead. And the younger one of the elder two is *exactly the same age* as the elder one of the younger two."

"How odd," he mused.

"It's more than odd. It's disgraceful. Especially since they call themselves English. It gives foreigners such a wrong idea of us. Don't you see what it entails? If the wife who died really was his wife, then that woman upstairs can't have been at the time the eldest child was born."

"No," said Mr. Pennefather, working it out, "she can't. Well! It doesn't matter."

"How doesn't it matter?" asked Beatrice, looking scandalized.

"It doesn't matter to anybody except herself, does it? She's a most delightful person. I've asked her to come with us to-day to Torcello."

"You asked!—then I can't go, Paul. I really can't. One has one's standards."

"I'm afraid we can't give up the expedition now I've asked her, Beatrice. And another thing." He was determined to get it all over at once. "I'm afraid we'll have to send home for more money."

He explained that he had been obliged to pay up six weeks' rent for Mrs. Sanger before Signora Radicci would give him the key of her flat. And when she understood this, Beatrice began to cry.

"Oh, Paul! How could you? How could you do such a thing? We must go home at once. You know we calculated exactly how much this holiday would cost us. We can't afford to stay if you've given away all that money."

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In the face of his explanations she grew resigned and resentful. If he liked to go to Torcello with the woman upstairs, of course he must go. She would stay behind and pack. If he liked to spend his money on other people's rent instead of his, or her, holiday, of course he must spend it. She would take their tickets for home. And when, at last, utterly shattered, he set forth on his expedition, she had shut herself up in her room and was wrapping her shoes in brown paper.

Mrs. Sanger met him on the stairs. Her face was sparkling with pleasure and an immediate anticipation of enjoyment. It played over the surface of her grave and sorrowing spirit as the sun will glance upon deep waters.

"I've got no hat," she said. "Does it matter?"

He looked at the black shawl, which she wore like a queen, and assured her that it did not matter at all. Resi, dressed out in a little blue shirt, was pleased to see him. She smiled and crowed and made a grab at his spectacles. When they had got into their gondola she lay in a basket beside her mother and stared contentedly at the gondolier.

The day was hot and not very clear. The waters, in the early sun, were as pale as nacre, so that the town, as they receded from it, seemed to be floating between the sea and the sky, like a treasure in the midst of a pearl. They went on slowly and smoothly northwards, over boundless pale lagoons, away from the towers and domes that hovered like a mirage on the air, past the cemetery, and Murano and a scattering of small mysterious islets. The space and the peace of it filled him with an idle pleasure, as though their day was going to last for ever. He found that his companion, in the revealing sunshine, was even

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more beautiful than he had supposed, and much younger. It had been no trick of the moonlight on the landing. She was really the most lovely creature that he had ever seen. Sorrow and privation had moulded her into lines too stern for her years, tempering her youthful radiance to a rare fineness which wrung his heart as it ravished his senses. He had seen enough of life to recognize the stigmata of suffering, and though he would not for worlds have had her different, he blamed Mr. Albert Sanger for making her what she was. Emboldened by the extreme simplicity of her manner, he asked outright how it had come about.

"Why did I marry him? Why—I ran away with him, and I suppose I didn't want to leave him."

"Why did you run away with him? How did you come to love him?"

She could give him no clue to this. He gathered that her girlhood had been spent in cultured security on Camden Hill. In a large house, she said, with a garden and an orchard, like a house in the country. So might Persephone have told of the daffodil fields where she wandered in that brief spring before she heard the chariot wheels of the Pursuer. She had gone to Germany to study music, and from thence she had been snatched suddenly to queen it in the underworld. She had been Sanger's pupil, his mistress, and at last his wife. She could not explain her capture; but in all she said of him there was a sort of resigned assurance of his superiority to other men. He had taken her as the gods of old took the daughters of the earth. His love had brought her into desperate straits. He was cruel. He was lustful. He left her when he pleased. He returned to her at will. Yet in

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their relations there appeared to be some secret element which left her anguished but serene.

"I wish," thought Mr. Pennefather, "that I could kick him up to the top of the Campanile. And then kick him down again. That would show her."

Aloud he said:

"But he's left you now?"

"Yes," she said. "He's left us. And I don't believe he will come back. He says that the children make too much noise."

Across the water an island with a tower stole towards them. It was like the end of the world. They pushed in among green vineyards and came to rest beside the small, deserted quay. The hordes of tourists who would come that afternoon in motor-launches were still at Murano among the glass factories.

Lifting Resi onto her shoulder, she went with him into the enormous empty church. But Resi, resenting the sudden plunge from sunshine into gloom, began to cry, so after a while she went out into the vineyards to wait until he had finished looking at the mosaics. When he came out he found them established among the vines beyond the Campanile, looking out across the water towards that little island with twelve cypresses which is called after St. Francis. She had set out a meal upon the grass, a bottle of Chianti, bread and cheese, and peaches. He had meant to go back later and study the church more fully, but instead he lay for the whole afternoon at her feet. He looked at her, and she looked over the lagoon at San Francesco nel Deserto. The churning of motor-launches, the distant voices of tourists among the ruins, could scarcely disturb them as they sat silent beside the dazzling waters.

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She was all that he had missed. She was all that he had longed for. She sat enthroned beside the sea, dreaming of the past, her glory worn to a dim enchantment by the tides which had submerged her, and she was his journey's end. Her pensive tranquillity, her moments of idle gaiety, her resignation, flowed out from a passion which was hidden from him. He only knew that he was sitting on the shores of peace, and for a little time he thought no more of things to come. But later, as they drifted back toward the sunset, he flung a foolish challenge to the morrow.

"Why don't you divorce him?" he said. "He gave you cause enough."

"Why should I do that?"

"You could marry somebody else."

"There are his children. I can't leave them."

He tried to think of all the Sanger children in his rectory, and gave it up. There would not even be enough bedrooms. And it was not as if they were all hers.

"Of course you can't leave Teresa," he agreed, adding irrelevantly, "she's like you."

He had grown fond of the little thing, and accepted her as part of her mother in a way that he had not accepted the rest. Because she had slept most of the day, and because she had not cried except in church, he imagined that she must be a very good little baby.

"She'll grow up like you," he repeated, gazing down into the steady grey eyes with which Resi stared at the sunset. "Look how she's watching those clouds. Will she remember to-day, do you think? How much do they remember? When she's a very old

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woman, will she dream of this sea and this sky? Perhaps she'll remember long after we've forgotten it."

A cold wind ruffled the rosy waters, and Mrs. Sanger shivered.

"I'm a very old woman now," she said. "I hope Resi will never be as old as I. If I thought so, I think I'd throw her into the lagoon. That's why I can't leave her."

"Perhaps your mother said that when you were a baby. Very, very, very long ago."

"Only a few minutes ago, really."

She took the child in her arms and rocked her up and down, singing in a low round voice which floated over the lagoon like the music of distant bells:

*"Such' dir den Schnee vom vergangenen Jahr:  
Das sag' ich so:*

*"Aber wie kann das wirklich sein,  
Das ich die kleine Resi war  
Und dass ich auch einmal die alte Frau sein werd'?  
Die alte Frau. . . ?"*

"What song is that?" asked Mr. Pennefather intelligently.

"It's from an opera that hasn't been published yet. Not my husband. No. But—"

She was drowned by their gondolier who, inspired by the sound of music, burst into a full-blooded rendering of "Santa Lucia." They sat up with a start and looked self-consciously about them. They had forgotten him. Venice, now a town of scattered lights under a saffron sky, swept swiftly down on them. It closed about them. Before they reached home night had

## PUSSYCAT PENNEFATHER

fallen, and Resi, who was hungry, had begun to scream. Her cries woke deafening echoes as they climbed the stairs, and he heard them going on unabated above his head when he had made his farewells and departed to his own flat. The other children were not silent, but Resi's squalls seemed to have a piercing quality which easily out-topped the rest. They pursued him triumphantly down the canal when, with his sister, he quitted Venice two hours later.

He found Beatrice hatted, veiled, and gloved for departure. Their trunks were packed, their tickets bought, and their places on the train reserved. Nor had he put up much fight, for he knew that he had better go. He had spent one day wisely, and that day should be his last. When he remembered Venice he would always remember Torcello and this woman whose Christian name he did not even know. But if he wished to keep this memory unspoilt he had better not see her again. So he allowed himself to be persuaded that they could not afford to stay, and went meekly down to the motor-launch which his sister had ordered to convey them and their luggage to the railway station.

Their departure caused less stir than their arrival, which had been at midday. No heads were poked out of windows and no little boys gathered round the doorstep as they embarked. The bridge at the corner, which had been crowded with spectators, was deserted save for a solitary person who stared down, not at Mr. Pennefather in the boat, but into the water. He was still there when they churned noisily beneath the bridge, and for a fraction of a second Mr. Pennefather, gazing upward, encountered a scrutiny, a piercing, ferocious stare which plunged down through the boat, and through the water to some invisible pit

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below. It made him feel mysteriously unsafe, and as they turned the corner he looked back. The figure was still there, its black cloak blown abroad by a sudden breeze, like sable wings.

"I've seen that man before," he thought suddenly. "A very tall man with bright eyes. But where?"

The bustle at the railway station put this question out of his mind. He had to find seats, and tip porters, and register luggage, and buy a bottle of soda-water to drink in the night, and unstrap their rugs. By the time that he had done all this he had grown so extremely anxious to be off that he forgot everything. He felt the train begin to move with an unmixed relief, though it bore him, with every yard, away from Venice. Not until they were well past Mestre did regrets assail him.

Then, as his sister dropped into a doze, a wretchedness more swift than any train overtook and engulfed him. He was devoured by anguish and remorse because he had not been braver. Having found happiness, he had run away. For he was very certain now that he valued this woman, the companion of a day, more than anything in the life to which he was returning. He asked himself amazedly what power save that of habit could have forced him to go back. It was true that he could not house all the infant Sangers in his rectory or invite his parishioners to call on a divorced woman. But he need not, after all, attempt to do this. No law compelled him to go on being a rector, or to remain in England for that matter. If he resigned his living he could make a home where he chose, and with whom he chose. His uncle's legacy would keep him from starvation, and he might find other work to do. He might have lived in Venice and seen her every day. He might even have persuaded her to get rid of Albert

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Sanger and cast in her lot with himself. But he was being carried relentlessly away from her, although he did not see how he was going to be able to live the rest of his life without her.

The train slowed down and stopped in a long, empty station. Doors banged, a man hurried shouting past, and in the sudden quiet he heard the murmuring voices and laughter of the people in the next carriage. He looked out of the window at the deserted platform and read the name of the place under the dim arc lights. It was Vicenza. A great hissing of steam from the engine filled the murky roof, and with a clanking jerk all down the train they began to move again into the darkness.

"I could have got out there," he thought, "and gone back to her."

He looked across at Beatrice, where she slept uneasily in her corner by the window. The pause and the jerk had not roused her. He thought, inconsequently, of the cold rice shape which he was forced to eat on Sunday nights for supper. He supposed that he would eat it till he died. Why did he eat it? Because the maids went out. Why did the maids go out? Because it was Sunday. And then he began to think of the friendships which had been the fuel of his life. They were nothing to him now. Of a book on the Greek particles which he had been writing for twelve years. He would never finish it. His friends despised him because he had not finished it. They called him—.

Another slow, and another stop, set something free which had lain imprisoned in his heart for forty years.

"This time," he thought, "I'll do it. I'll go back."

He sat beside the door of the compartment. Peering at his sister he made sure that she was still asleep. Nor did she wake

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when, having hastily scribbled a little note, he put it on the seat beside her and secured it with the soda-water bottle. He got up cautiously, slipped into the corridor, edged his way along it, and climbed down onto the platform. A moment later the long train slid off and he was left standing beneath the arc lights of Verona.

They told him that the next train would not leave until the morning, so for the rest of the night he took a room at an hotel. He occupied the cold and vacant hours in the composition of three letters: one to his sister, one to his bishop, and one to his bankers. But fatigue and excitement interfered with his syntax, and the ink in his pen ran out, so that he was forced to put them aside until he could make fair copies. When day broke he went out and walked about. The town was beginning to stir. He visited the tombs of the Scaligeri, walked all round the outside of the Arena, and spent some time in meditation upon each of the bridges. But of all that he saw in Verona he could remember nothing afterwards save the figure of a black, shawled woman with a shapely head, who had walked before him in the street and who deceived him into rapturous comparisons until he caught sight of her face. His train was due to go at nine o'clock, and he returned to the station before seven. As soon as he was off he fell asleep, dozing wearily for the greater part of the journey. Just before Mestre he woke with a start as a cyclonic express whirled by. It was full of people coming away from Venice. He pitied them all from the bottom of his heart, especially those who were returning to suburban rectories.

A royal blaze of sunshine dazzled his eyes as he came out of the station. It flashed upon the sea and spread a pall of saffron

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over creamy walls. He marvelled that he should have managed to be gloomy, for three whole weeks, in this town of splendour and bright waters. Swift, enchanting surprises caught at him on every side as he made his way to the Giudecca. With a half-conscious relief he saw that the watcher of the night before was gone. The little bridge at the corner was empty. So also was the stone stairway of the house. So was the landing where he had found the children in the moonlight. And so, as he tapped at their half-open door, was the room beyond. It seemed to be so very bare and silent that he stepped at last across the threshold to view, with a shock of dread, unwonted order. Something terrible had happened, so that he was only able to see a table and two chairs. No little clothes hung from the ceilings, no toys lay scattered on the floor. The copper pots and the onions and the flowered shawl were gone. He looked into the bedrooms and saw bare pallets and a great heap of torn newspapers, broken bottles and straw. Not only had they all departed, but every trace of them had vanished in the night.

He sat upon one of the beds and wound up his watch, too much shocked to understand anything at all save that his new-found wings had borne him, not to heaven, but to vacancy. And after a little while he went down to the Padrona's door. She was out. A little girl who played upon the quay told him that she had gone to Mass.

"Nobody is in that house," she said. "They have all gone away. Last night the English went. And this morning all the children and the mother and the man who came for them. I saw them. They have gone away in a train."

When he asked blankly what sort of a man it was who had

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come for them, she said a great man with a black beard, and she made a sign as though to avert the evil eye.

Once more he climbed the stairs, very slowly and panting slightly. Not that he hoped to find any trace of her, but because he had nowhere else to go. For a long time he stood motionless beside the open window, where the sun poured in with heartless, intolerable brilliance. And then he went into the bedroom. To the heap of rubbish on the floor he added the fragments of the three letters he had begun to his sister, and his bishop, and his bankers. They lay like snowflakes on the straw and the broken bottles, and a torn picture of a great conductor and a little orchestra and an arena of empty seats.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

## THE CICADAS

**S**IIGHTLESS, I breathe and touch; this night of pines  
Is needly, resinous and rough with bark.  
Through every crevice in the tangible dark  
The moonlessness above it all but shines.

Limp hangs the leafy sky; never a breeze  
Stirs, nor a foot in all this sleeping ground;  
And there is silence underneath the trees—  
The living silence of continuous sound.

For like inveterate remorse, like shrill  
Delirium throbbing in the fevered brain,  
An unseen people of cicadas fill  
Night with their one harsh note, again, again.

Again, again, with what insensate zest!  
What fury of persistence, hour by hour!  
Filled with what devil that denies them rest,  
Drunk with what source of pleasure and of power!

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Life is their madness, life that all night long  
Bids them to sing and sing, they know not why;  
Mad cause and senseless burden of their song;  
For life commands, and Life! is all their cry.

I hear them sing, who in the double night  
Of clouds and branches fancied that I went  
Through my own spirit's dark discouragement,  
Deprived of inward as of outward sight:

Who, seeking, even as here in the wild wood,  
A lamp to beckon through my tangled fate,  
Found only darkness and, disconsolate,  
Mourned the lost purpose and the vanished good.

Now in my empty heart the crickets' shout  
Re-echoing denies and still denies  
With stubborn folly all my learned doubt,  
In madness more than I in reason wise.

Life, life! The word is magical. They sing,  
And in my darkened soul the great sun shines;  
My fancy blossoms with remembered spring,  
And all my autumn ripens on the vines.

Life! and each knuckle of the fig-tree's pale  
Dead skeleton breaks out with emerald fire,  
Life! and the tulips blow, the nightingale  
Calls back the rose, calls back the old desire;

## THE CICADAS

And old desire that is for ever new,  
Desire, life's earliest and latest birth,  
Life's instrument to suffer and to do,  
Springs with the roses from the teeming earth;

Desire that from the world's bright body strips  
Deforming time and makes each kiss the first;  
That gives to hearts, to satiated lips  
The endless bounty of to-morrow's thirst.

Time passes and the watery moonrise peers  
Between the tree-trunks. But no outer light  
Tempers the chances of our groping years,  
No moon beyond our labyrinthine night.

Clueless we go; but I have heard thy voice,  
Divine unreason! harping in the leaves,  
And grieve no more; for wisdom never grieves,  
And thou hast taught me wisdom; I rejoice.

DAVID GARNETT

## COLONEL BEECH'S BEAR

**I**N MY childhood there was a Spaniard who used to travel round the country with a dancing bear, and sometimes visit us. Such men and such bears have been kept out of England for a long time by a humane law which, in preventing cruelty, has prevented bears altogether, to the great loss of country children. I am not callous about the sufferings of animals, and have been told that the bears were often cruelly treated. But I am sorry that they have vanished, and would bring them back if I could.

In the happy days before motor-cars I lived with my father and mother in a lonely cottage overlooking a great sweep of blue valley and shut in on all sides by a big wood in which I spent my childhood, creeping among the dry bracken like a serpent and imagining myself to be one of Fenimore Cooper's noble redskins. Everyone who came to our house had to approach it by the cart-track through the wood, and scouting along the paths with pheasants' feathers in my hair, I would catch sight of any strange figure and rush back to warn my parents.

Twice I remember the Spaniard visiting us, and each time I was waiting to spy him from my ambush. The man came first, walking down the steep narrow path under the pine-trees down the side of the hill, with a pole over his shoulder and a chain in

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his hand, and at his heels shambled the bear, looking rather like an enormous bob-tail sheep-dog. I let them pass by, watched them turn in at the gate, and followed after them fearfully. They had stopped on a little plot of grass at the top of the garden by the pony's stable, and the Spaniard had taken out a little flute or whistle-pipe on which he blew a sharp note to call the household about him. Soon my father and mother and Nellie Outram the kitchen-maid and Bert Tidy the garden boy had gathered round, and I had gained confidence to approach nearer. How vividly I remember the eager faces, the clear morning, and our astonishing visitors!

The Spaniard wore an odd slouch hat which seemed to be made of faded yellow linen stretched over a framework of cane. His jacket was of yellowish corduroy with metal buttons, and there were one or two waist-coats below. His trousers were also corduroy, gathered in all the way down between the ankle and the knee. He had some bright colour about him, perhaps a red hand-kerchief at the throat. The man himself was dark-skinned and dirty, with a bold eye, black stubble on his chin and cheek-bones, and a small reddish-black moustache. The bear was pale buff, yellowish grey and fawn in colour, though I have no doubt it was one of our own jolly brown European bears, a Spanish or Basque bear from the Pyrenees. He had an iron collar round his neck and a steel chain, but he did not wear a muzzle.

When we were all assembled, Bruin reared up on his hind-legs; his master gave him the pole to hug in his furry arms and then began to play a tune on his whistle-pipe, and hearing the notes, the bear began lifting his feet in a clumsy dance. Round and round the little plot of grass he went, but all too soon the

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dance was over and the bear walked round the circle with his master's hat in his mouth, and I was brave enough to drop in the shilling which my father gave me. The Spaniard knew no English, and my mother's attempts to speak to him in foreign languages were not a success, so he was pronounced a Basque, but at least they resulted in my being allowed to pat the bear, which seemed as good-natured and merry as such a beast can be in company, for bears love solitude better than the admiration of little boys.

Food was brought and water, and the bear ate bread and apples, and, having nothing left to stay for, the Spaniard took off his hat, smiled, bowed, and marched off into the woods with his staff in his hand and his bear at his heels. I followed after for some little way into the wood, watching with worshipping eyes the bear's rump and the man who walked so bravely in front with the pole on his shoulder, for to my childish mind no prince could have travelled with a finer bodyguard, and for a few days after each of their visits, my poor dog had to follow me on a chain as a bear and patiently endure my attempts to teach him to stand on his hind-legs and dance. There was cruelty in that to be sure.

Such were the man and his bear, and I know all too little about their life together, except that they seemed to keep to our district and lived a good deal out of doors in the wood, going off on expeditions to all the surrounding villages and coming back to rest under a tall beech or pine. I imagine them returning in the evening, tired out after a long tramp, the man with a pocketful of pennies and the bear with the memory of the teasing joy of children, settling themselves down happily under a great tree

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and feeling themselves safe from any intrusion. The sun has set, the evening star shines out in the pale blue sky, the tiny flame leaps up under the Spaniard's hands, and his tin pot is soon boiling. The bear has soon eaten up his supper of a loaf of stale bread and half a dozen bananas, and has lapped up a pan of water, and he lies sleepily with his nose between his paws while the man sits eating a crust of bread and a raw onion; then with his long knife cuts off a bit of cheese and throws the rind as a tit-bit to his beast. Under the tree there is a strong smell: the odour of man as strong as that of bear, and when the man fills his pipe the smell of shag soon blends with the other scents and the wood-smoke and the raw onions. When the pipe is finished the man gets up and walks over to look at the sleeping bear, sees that the chain is made fast to a great beech root, and then he goes back and lies down himself beside his little fire, draws a tattered over-coat over his shoulders and a couple of sacks over his legs, and falls asleep. Now and then the man and the bear stir a little as the night wears on, disturbed by their dreams or by their fleas, and whether they share the same fleas as do men and dogs, or whether each keeps his own, is more than I can say.

That picture can't be far from the truth, and I should have no tale to tell if it were not for what I learned from Nellie Outram. Nellie was a very pretty girl of sixteen, with dark ringlets, bold eyes and red cheeks, and distinguished by a sort of brassy insolence in everything she said and did. Like every village girl, she loved a confidant; her tongue had to wag while she was at work, and I very often followed her from room to room as she made the beds, or stood and listened by the scullery door while she peeled potatoes. In this way I learned all about the first love-

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affairs of village boys and girls, of the distinctions between "walking-out" and "keeping company," and of the mysteries of the initials carved upon the smooth trunks of the beech-trees. On Sunday afternoon Nellie would carve N. O. on a tree and in a few days S. T. would appear carved underneath with a heart encircling both, for Nellie walked out with Sid Tidy, the younger brother of our garden boy. I, of course, felt it very exciting to hear about such grown-up secrets.

One day Nellie arrived in a state of great excitement. It seemed that the Spaniard had left his bear tied up by the spring of water in the wood and had gone off to the local town. While he was there he had met another Spaniard and they had gone together to drink in a little public-house. Nobody had ever heard the man speak more than a few words of broken English, and he had always been very sober, but now his tongue was loosened and the two foreigners jabbered away as hard as they could, drinking first one glass and then another until they were both tipsy. Just before closing time their voices grew louder and it seemed to the onlookers that they were quarrelling; then suddenly one of them pulled out a knife and they were both trying to murder each other. They were separated before they had done any harm; the police took charge and marched them off to the station.

The bench of magistrates happened to meet next day, presided over by Colonel Beech, an elderly country gentleman with a very good heart but a bit stupid. When the police produced the two Spaniards he would not hear a word about attempted murder or malicious wounding.

"We must give them fair play, Sergeant. We shall never find

## COLONEL BEECH'S BEAR

out the rights and wrongs of it. Reduce the charge to being drunk and disorderly and we'll let 'em off with ten days."

The Spaniard had it on the tip of his tongue to explain about his bear, then he thought better of it, for he didn't trust anyone, and he could never make himself understood. He must have thought the bear would survive ten days' starvation: he had given it a good meal, it had water, and after all, bears hibernate and go for months without food.

So the Spaniard sat in prison holding his head in his hands and thinking about his bear tied up to the tree by the spring, dragging at his chain, worrying at his collar, walking round, lying down again, dozing off to sleep and getting more and more hungry. Then he kept thinking how he would make up for it by giving the bear a good meal when he got out.

Colonel Beech was fond of shooting, and in addition to preserving pheasants in his own coverts he rented most of the shooting round about, thinking to make sure in that way of his pheasants that strayed into the woods which were open to the public. One of his under-keepers was a pleasant boy of twenty, and hearing after a few days that the Spaniard had been sent to gaol but that nobody had seen the bear, he set out to look for it himself, for he had several times met them coming and going in the wood. He went straight to the spring and found the bear at once; then he went home and came back with a dead rabbit and a lot of dog-biscuits, and stood watching the beast munch them up and swallow them. After that he was puzzled what to do.

"The brute may have turned savage for lack of food," he thought. "I'll report it to the head-keeper, and if we can manage him together we'll take him to the barn at the farm where I

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lodge and after that I'll feed him till his master comes out of prison."

But the head-keeper did not like the suggestion that they should unfasten the bear, and ran off to tell the Colonel about the discovery.

"We've found a savage bear chained up to a tree," he may have said; and we can imagine the Colonel's excitement and astonishment. Soon a party of men was formed, headed by the Colonel carrying the rifle he had used in India, and his favourite fox-terrier frisking and bounding round his legs. When they reached the spring the dog barked and the bear growled back: the yapping of dogs was always hateful to him and the tramp of the men's feet alarmed him.

Colonel Beech was always full of public spirit; he looked at the bear, heard it growling and saw that it was a dangerous beast, which, maddened by hunger, might very easily break its chain. Children often came playing, and women gathering sticks in the wood. He shuddered to think of the dangers which they had been running.

"Well, there's only one thing to be done: we must shoot it."

But the under-keeper spoke up and offered to take charge of the bear if he could get it back to the barn.

"Very sporting offer, Johnson," said Colonel Beech. "But there are children where you lodge and I can't let you take the responsibility. Bears are very treacherous customers to deal with, and if it broke loose...."

So the bear was shot, and rolled over at once, stone-dead. A cartridge case was jerked out onto the yellow leaves, the dogs stood trembling and hanging back while the men gathered round

## COLONEL BEECH'S BEAR

the creature, rolled it over, touched the fur and unfastened the chain. They were all rather sorry for what they had done, and none of them more so than Colonel Beech.

"Poor fellow," he said. "Poor old chap. But you're better dead than with a damned swine who would go away and leave you starving."

And thinking with disgust of the suffering the bear must have endured with the cruel Spaniard, he walked home alone, still feeling rather excited inside, for he had never shot a bear before. Later in the day he sent a cart to fetch the bear, and the skin was sent up to Rowland Ward to be made into a carriage-rug, and a month later Nellie Outram told me that the Miss Beeches were driving about with the bearskin over their knees.

When the Spaniard was let out of prison and heard what had happened he made himself scarce. He had no wish to serve another sentence for leaving the bear unattended; and the Colonel would have dropped on him pretty heavily. He had a love of fair play and couldn't stand cruelty to animals. So the Spaniard did not wait to see his bear's skin spread out in the victoria. He was a ruined man, who would have to make strange shifts to get himself back into his native land.

HENRY NEWBOLT  
DU CÔTÉ DE CHEZ  
RENARD  
A FABLE

O NCE on a night when magic of the moon  
Lay broad on Exmoor like a fairy noon,  
Up from his earth in Horner's secret glades—  
Silent in silence, shadow among shades—  
To the lone farm on the lone hill-side sleeping,  
Reynard the Fox came creeping, creeping, creeping.

At edge of wood he stopped and sniffed the air,  
Covey and hen-roost both he knew were there,  
But lingering a moment in two minds  
He heard the steady crunch of browsing hinds,  
And saw the great stag taking snatch by snatch  
His half-scorned tribute from the turnip patch.

“Fox,” said His Grace, “though somewhat under  
size,  
You have been long reputed not unwise.  
Counsel me, then—To-day I heard report  
That men are minded to forgo their sport.  
'Tis said in that new-fangled world of theirs  
Where the hinds now conduct the stags' affairs,

## DU CÔTÉ DE CHEZ RENARD

War is forbidden, hunting is to cease,  
And all live things may multiply in peace.  
What shall I say, then—shall I disapprove,  
Or take the lead myself and head the move?  
Hunting does little harm that I can find,  
But it wastes time, and sometimes kills a hind.  
As for myself, I never look to see  
A pack of hounds within two miles of me,  
But if it suits you little beasts of fur  
To have them banned, why should I not concur?"

Reynard replied, "Your Grace is much too kind  
To take account of rabbit or of hind.  
The question of importance, I will show,  
Is whether wild life shall survive or no.  
Consider, then—if your exalted rank  
Does not disable me from being frank—  
What can the red deer or the fox be worth  
To the strange tribe with whom we share the earth?  
Wood, moorland, combe,—our heritage we hold  
Upon a tenure oldest of the old,  
Rendering and paying each his annual scot—  
Speed in the chase or savour in the pot,  
Receiving too, for our mere livelihood,  
Whatever we can find in field or wood,  
Men grudge us this provision, call it theft,  
Say that we pick, and they have what is left.  
But here another sacred law comes in—  
To shoot a red deer or a fox is sin.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

We are forgiven then, and keep our place,  
Pleading our privilege as beasts of chase.  
But can we hope, when all these laws are gone,  
That our immunity will still go on?  
Duck, chicken, partridge, turnip, hay and corn—  
All these are paid for now by note of horn,  
Paid for time out of mind:—but when they're not—  
When we are no more chased—we shall be shot.”

Up went the ten tines of His Grace's head:  
“I did not catch the sense of what you said.”

“Pardon, my lord, not mine was the offence,  
In men's affairs there is but seldom sense.  
These countrymen of ours, being so humane,  
From such extremes may possibly refrain.  
They will not kill, but offer in the Zoo  
A cage for me, a model moor for you,  
Where we may multiply, secure from guns,  
And nourish freedom on a dole of buns.”

At that the deer their haughty heads all tossed,  
And at a bound the moonlight field recrossed,  
Flitting along the open moor as swift  
As a light cloud before the wind may drift—  
Till they were gone—whither I cannot say,  
But still, I trust, to follow Nature's way.  
Our old friend, Reynard, when the dawn was near,  
Went home in the old style with Chanticleer.

A. E. COPPARD

# WILT THOU LEAVE ME THUS?

ENNIE BAXTER had an unmistakable aptitude for talking business: he was in a profession that excited a full measure of talk, for you cannot sell second-hand motor-cars unless you have a lyrical impulse. The firm of Baxter & Brabazon was well known in its own circle: at least Rennie Baxter was known—for there wasn’t any Brabazon—never had been—and why Rennie elected to call himself Baxter & Brabazon I cannot tell. There was a manager, a beautiful man with an awful name (you could not call anything, not even a menagerie, Baxter & Macgillicuddy), and there was the mechanic, Tutt, with a markedly orbicular nose, whose pessimism was excessive. The three of them operated in a showroom and garage combined that put a bold front upon misfortune; for truth must be told, and the truth was that Baxter & Brabazon were in low water: indeed its unpleasant tide was lapping at their very door sill. Here was Rennie Baxter at the age of thirty, a nice bachelor fellow with the pleasing gift, yet success was coy and the fulfilment of his hopes was impeded by this, that, and the other until he began to be positively annoyed. Talk! My God, if conversation alone could

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have done it Rennie would have been capable of selling perambulators to the British Army; but there's many a slip 'twixt the lip and the ratification, and so he did not do anything of the kind; and if the truth must be told—what *is* the good of truth unless you nail it to your counter like a bad, unwanted coin?—he was not a good man of business, he was just romantic. Of course, I mean he was romantic about business, not about romantical things. Apart from the perilous implements he dealt in he was not so very romantic. Though he knew something of history it was certainly not the most recent contortions, and upon politics his views were as frivolous as the subject of them. A mild fancy for poetry occasionally beset him, and then he would stick poems into a sort of scrapbook as if they were so many foreign stamps. Art was Greek, music Sumerian; and although like most men he was quite unaware of this specific ignorance, he knew nothing, absolutely, about women.

At the time we meet him he is entertaining his Aunt Betsy, his only relative on earth, who dwelt at Heckmondwike, but had come to pay a short visit to London and to him. Now Aunt Betsy, a charming limp old maid of fifty with a tendency to hiccoughs and a slight lisp, but no slightness elsewhere, for she was plump as a ptarmigan, desired him to take her to a performance of *Macbeth*—the ways of Providence are really too inscrutable—so she was being taken by her nephew to see this *Macbeth*, and as a preparation for it they had gone to sup in a popular café, a heaving, breathing cavern of music, and Aunt Betsy was nourishing herself on a sort of niggard's hash of tomato soup and whitebait to the accompaniment of the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Yes, the habits of popular cafés, too, are as

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inscrutable as the ways of Providence. You are to understand that Baxter had lately changed his lodgings.

"Do you like your new lodgings, Rennie?"

"Yes, Aunt, they do to burrow in."

"The bed isn't damp, is it? You have to be so careful of the rheumatics nowadays."

"No, Aunt, I never have rheumatics."

"My father never had the rheumatics either," said Aunt Betsy. "He didn't understand them and he didn't believe in them. But still!—I expect they are rather expensive, aren't they?"

"Oh, hideously!" he agreed.

Aunt Betsy wore spectacles and had a complexion that he always thought of as "pebbly," a meaningless epithet. She glanced round at the orchestra and sighed: "I always love to hear music, when I am eating. But I say, Rennie, don't you ever think sometimes—Oh, is that chutney, dear? Pass the chutney. Don't you ever think sometimes—thank you—of getting married?"

Rennie dug into his chop, and said that he did not. Aunt Betsy tore up a morsel of bread and asked why he was so funny.

"I didn't know I was funny," he replied.

"I mean"—Aunt Betsy leaned towards him, her fork impaling crisp fishes—"why *don't* you think of getting married?"

"Well, Aunt," he retorted expansively, "of course, I don't know why *I* don't think of it."

Aunt Betsy sighed again. "Oh, dear, aren't you a *bit* romantic? I wonder if I could have a cup of tea?"

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Rennie said "I should say so," and then, with that air of vulgar jocularity for which he was often and deservedly blamed, added: "Have two, Aunt, one for each ear!"

"Ridiculous!" she giggled. "Listen to the music. I love that piece. Do you know what it makes me think of? It always makes me think of the end of the world. Oh, dear, I suppose there will be an end of the world some day, Rennie?"

"Oh, you may depend upon it," Rennie replied; "oh, Lord, yes, but we shan't be here to see it. Waitress, could we have a cup of tea, one cup?"

The waitress echoed: "One cup of tea" and addressed herself to the task of obtaining it by dashing three knives into a tin tray and scratching her neck with a lead pencil while the Intermezzo made the ascent to its conclusion and was drowned in a splutter of hand-clapping.

"I wish you would think of it though, Rennie, seriously. It would be so much more comfortable if you were settled down with a nice quiet little wife."

"Oh, I should hate a nice quiet little wife," he protested.

"Well, what *do* you want, dear; what *would* you like, eh? I am sure there are plenty of nice girls," continued Aunt Betsy, staring all round the great restaurant, "hundreds, who would be glad to get married."

"To me!" he exclaimed.

She nodded.

"But I couldn't marry hundreds."

"I mean"—she put it so earnestly—"I mean, to choose from."

"Thank you, Aunt, thank you." And he too glanced round

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the great room. "Do you mean here, now, this very minute?"

The cup of tea was placed before Aunt Betsy; she took no sugar, but stirred the drink thoughtfully before murmuring: "You know very well what I mean." Her hands were "pebbly" too, and the spoon somehow looked graceless in her fingers. "You're not a Bluebeard; there are surely some girls who would do," she exclaimed plaintively.

"Do!" cried Rennie, feeling as if someone were trying to fit him with a hat from a toy shop, "why, I never met one who would even half do!"

"This will do very well," said a strange voice at his shoulder, and two young ladies settled themselves nonchalantly in the two unoccupied chairs at the Baxters' table. In that exquisite moment Rennie began to be a lost man, for one of the girls was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. Dark, pale, and silent, her hands white and slightly plump, with pointed finger-nails, she was not merely the most beautiful—she was indeed the unknown, the moving, the dreamed-of. There was some fur around her neck and she was dressed in black. The other girl, plain and voluble, had spots on her chin, pimples. They ordered some trifling refreshment and listened to the band, but Rennie was plunged into blissful turmoil, feeling that the eyes of the lovely one were upon him all the while. Yet as often as he with superhuman effort forced his reluctant perturbed orbs to gloom up at hers her glance flashed away and was gone like a darting swallow. He heard her soft voice, and its tones quivered in his apprehension as if she were inviting him. To what? To what? Oh, they were very subtly addressed to him, to him alone, and he was in love with her already. The

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sudden presence, the voice, the bewildering eyes, all had confuted and inflamed him.

*“Who loves a first time is a god”*

He may very well believe so, but his thoughts are often on the brink of the insane.

“Do tell me, Nora,” murmured the lovely one to her pimpled friend, “tell me all about it.”

“No,” responded Nora quickly; “I will not confide in you.”

“Do. Why not?”

“You know,” replied Nora, “I cannot trust you.”

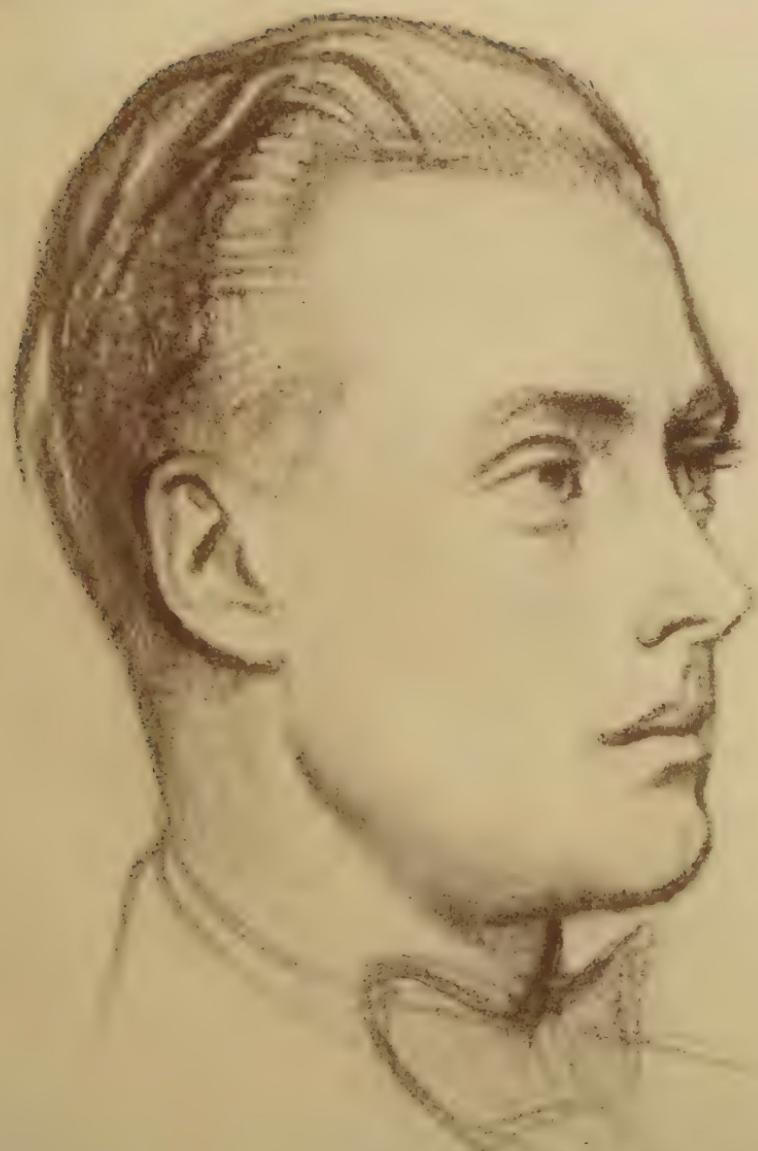
The handsome girl did not seem to resent this, indeed her interest in her friend’s secret seemed factitious; her gaze ranged serenely over the room and then came to rest upon her friend again, but in its passage she had caught for a dwelling moment a stare from the enamoured Baxter, and it was as if she had said to him alone: “Do not believe it! Do not believe it!” And he wanted to tell her that he would never believe any such thing, that Nora was a preposterous fool; he wanted to caress her hand that rested on the table only a foot away from him; he wanted to fling himself into her good graces at once. But he was diffident, modest; he would have to begin: “Excuse me, here is my Aunt Betsy.”

And Aunt Betsy, moved by the passion for louder conversation that invades some people when strangers enter the company, had been talking steadily into her nephew’s unlistening ears. Swinging back from Elysium he caught a phrase:

“... And I told him to call and see you.”

“Who, Aunt?”

“Mr. Quantrill.”



W. Rothenstein 1924

*William Rothenstein*



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“Who is he?”

“He’s the sailor.”

“I don’t know him, I never heard of him,” declared Rennie.

“But—what is the matter with you—I’ve been telling you all about him!”

“Oh, you’ve been telling me?”

“Yes. He’s been all round the world, everywhere; three years he has been gone, and he came to see me.”

“Oh, he came to see you?”

“Yes, he came straight from the boat when he landed at Hull.”

Rennie observed his aunt’s pebbly face, her grey hair, and wondered.

“Did you like him?”

Aunt Betsy paused and peered unamiably at the handsome girl who was staring so audaciously at her nephew.

“It was one Saturday night he came,” she answered, a little lamely.

“Did you like him?” repeated Rennie.

“I—well—I liked him better when he came on Sunday morning.”

“Oh,” commented he, and Aunt Betsy then became engrossed in some private recollection of the mariner’s call. Rennie saw that the proud, silent girl was smiling, as if she too understood, and the communion between them, mystical and exciting, was resumed and deepened. She wanted him to speak to her; she waited: he knew it as surely as he knew his own fingers, but oh, heavens, how could he speak to her! If only Aunt Betsy had been at the bottom of the sea with her drunken sailor, or at the top of Mount Ararat; if only she had been buried in the bosom

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of Heckmondwike, where she belonged, and had not thrust herself upon him at this precise juncture, why, then he could have spoken to the girl; he could have spoken to both of them; they would have gone out together, and he would have taken the lovely one on long journeys into fine places—the valley of the Dove, with its cataracts, and birch-trees, and larks singing.

Nora was speaking to her friend again: “You will be home late to-night. Eleven?”

The other nodded.

“Then I must give you the latchkey.”

Nora took a key from her handbag and put it on the table in front of her friend, who did not take it up, but let it lie there.

The girls had finished their refreshments, so had Aunt Betsy and her nephew, but all sat there as if expectant. Baxter was now miserably uneasy, the girl immobile and silent, but with a soft appeal emanating from her simple muteness.

“Rennie, oughtn’t we to be going?” asked Aunt Betsy.

“Yes.” Curse it, why did not something happen! He felt like a grain of steel being torn from a magnet. The waitress gave him the bill and he stood up to put on his overcoat. Then, without flinching, they looked one at each other; her lips were slightly parted as if it hurt her to breathe, her eyes were mournful now. Into his mind floated the line of an old poem he had lately glued into his scrapbook:

*And wilt thou leave me thus? Say nay, say nay!*

Trembling with emotion that he could not bear a moment longer he turned and seized his hat and followed Aunt Betsy to the pay-desk.

## WILT THOU LEAVE ME THUS?

"What awful creatures those two girls were!" his aunt murmured to him.

"Ah," he sighed savagely, but at the exit he began to mutter and fumble in his pockets. "Oh, Aunt! I've left my—Yes, I've left it on that table. Excuse me a moment. You go on, I'll catch you in a second."

The girl had turned in her chair and was watching his approach. No mournfulness now: a smile, part triumph, part relief, blushed upon her face. Rennie took a visiting-card from his vest pocket and stalking up, silently handed it to her.

"Ah—um," he said, too moved to utter a steady or intelligible syllable.

She crushed the card in her palm, concealing it from her friend, then bowed to Rennie with a delighted smile. No more. At once he turned to rush away, but was impeded for a moment by some incomers, and he heard Nora exclaim: "What is it? Let me see!"

"No," was the soft reply. "I cannot trust you."

Well, he took Aunt Betsy to the performance of *Macbeth*, and he disliked it savagely. At each interval he stalked out to the bar and drank excessively, and contemplated running away and leaving Aunt Betsy to her doom. He would run to the popular café—but she would be gone now. A notion that the girl was somewhere in the theatre obsessed and distracted him, but he could not see her anywhere. No, he would have to wait, he must wait and hear from her; she would write to him, she knew now who he was; she would have realized his difficult situation, and he would hear from her to-morrow. Or the day after.

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The next day—oh, implacable irony!—Aunt Betsy returned to Heckmondwike, and as Rennie pushed her through the doorway of the train he hoped he might never see her again or hear of her again, but most of all he wished he never *had* seen her, an old flabby fool woman who waddled rather than walked and looked like getting herself into trouble with a drunken sailor. Serve her right, a good job too! It would keep her out of mischief in future.

Hour by hour now he tried to conjure up pictures of the girl he had so suddenly and violently begun to love, but to his chagrin he could not clearly recall her distinguished features. And everything got mixed up with *Macbeth* and tomato soup and *Cavalleria Rusticana*. But of course she was just too beautiful. Dark and pale and silent, dressed in a black velvet jacket with fur cuffs and fur round the neck. A black hat. What sort of a hat? Oh, just a hat, that would look silly when she took it off. And pointed finger-nails; the Chinese did that, but hers were only pointed a little. And her eyes! Her eyes were half sad, half joyful; their glances were like swallows flashing by, and they called—it was as if they called—to a far-off fortune.

Days went by, but he did not hear from her. Then suddenly he remembered a fearful thing: the visiting-card he had given her bore only his old address, not the one to which he had recently changed. Off to the old lodgings he flew, but no letter had come for him there, no one had called, and his high emotion sank into a despondency, from which, however, he was sharply recovered. Oh, yes, indeed, and for days you might say he scarcely had time to think of her.

In the way of trade he had bought a motor-car very cheaply,  
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but after a day or two he began to suspect that it had been stolen. He made a scrupulous examination, and the Macgillicuddy was doubtful. Tutt was certain. So was Rennie, and he had but one course open to him. A year previously Baxter & Brabazon had unluckily been involved in a similar affair and had been subjected to some phosphoric comments by the magistrate. Baxter & Brabazon could not afford to run that risk again and therefore Rennie reported his present suspicions to the police. They investigated, inspected, and interviewed, and soon it appeared that the motor-car had indeed been stolen.

Inspector Catchpole, a man with the speech and features of a yeoman, the dimensions of a Hercules, and the deportment of a parrot, interrogated Mr. Baxter.

"How did this car come into your possession, Mr. Baxter?"

"I bought it off a fellow; he's only a youngster, keeps a little tinpot garage, sells petrol, and mends bicycles."

"Name?"

"Cox."

"Address?"

"12 Threpenham Street."

"How much did you give him for it?"

"A hundred pounds."

Inspector Catchpole peered at the car for some portentous moments, treated Rennie to a similar gaze, and repeated:

"How much?"

"A hundred pounds."

The inspector dashed his forefinger gently across his nostrils.

"'Twasn't dear, Mr. Baxter. When did you pay him?"

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"Two days ago."

"In cash?"

"No, cheque," said Rennie.

"Have you stopped payment at the bank?"

"No, I post-dated it for to-morrow."

With his gaze now fixed upon Rennie's waistcoat, Mr. Catchpole asked: "Why did you do that?"

"I was short of cash and couldn't meet it until then."

"Oh, have you done business with this young chap before?"

"Yes, once or twice."

"Satisfactory?"

"Quite."

The inspector finished taking notes, and said: "I'll use your telephone, Mr. Baxter."

He rang up the police station in Cox's district and told them to get Mr. Cox to step along to that station, where he would come over and interview him straightaway.

"Now, Mr. Baxter, will you take me over there in one of your cars? We shall have to take charge of this one. I'll send a man for it."

Away they went to the police station. It was a cold, damp morning. Awaiting them there was Cox, a youth with a pleasant oily face and a mop of fat mahogany hair. Dressed in dark blue overalls, he was sitting with his elbows on his knees, dangling a cap between his legs, and he looked up with a smile as they entered. The police office was decorated in pea-green and chocolate, had a sloping desk along one wall, a table, chairs, registers, a nice fire, three policemen, and a counter with a flap in it.

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"Morning, Briggs," growled Inspector Catchpole to the station sergeant as he lifted the flap and stalked in. After whispering a few words to Briggs he took off his gloves, stuffed them in his pocket, took off his overcoat and laid it on a chair.

"Just come this way," and followed by the others he entered a smaller office, where they all sat down, the inspector at a table with his notebook before him.

"You are Robert Cox?"

"Yes, sir."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-one, sir."

"I want to ask you how you came into possession of the car you sold Mr. Baxter two days ago."

The youth was again sitting with his elbows on his knees, dangling his cap, and he looked up at the inspector with a faint amusement in his bright glance.

"I bought it from a customer of mine, a Mr. Robinson."

"Where does he live? What is he?"

"Live! I really don't know where he lives, sir."

"Do you know where he is at present?"

"He's gone abroad somewhere."

"Well, just tell me how you came to buy this car from this Mr. Robinson who's just gone abroad."

It appeared that Mr. Robinson sometimes stored his car in Cox's garage. He had done so at intervals for the past two years, but now he had gone abroad and he had offered to sell the car cheap rather than store it until he came back. Eighty pounds was what he asked for it.

"Well, it was a bargain, sir, but I hadn't got near enough

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money, so he said couldn't I borrow the money, so I thought of a clergyman who's done me a kindness more than once and I went to the clergyman, and he said he would lend me fifty pounds if I would be sure and pay it back in a week, so I had it, because I reckoned I could sell that car in a week. I'd got twenty pounds of my own and I borrowed another ten off a friend, and that's how I paid Mr. Robinson—eighty pounds in notes."

"Who is this clergyman?"

"Mr. Tillion, sir." The reverend gentleman's address was close by. Inspector Catchpole laid down his pencil as if it were made of very delicate material, leaned back in his chair, cast one of his legs over the other, and tucked his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat.

"And where may this Mr. Robinson be now?"

"That I can't say, sir."

"Why not?"

"I never did know where he lived. Used to come in at odd times, not very often, and pay when he took his car away."

The inspector said gruffly: "Now look here. You say you bought this car from him. You say you paid him a large sum of money—and you say you don't know where he lives! Come, come, now."

"More I don't, sir; I never did know, and he told me he was going abroad."

"When did you pay this eighty pounds?"

The youth reflected: "Twelve days ago."

"Humph!" Catchpole leaned forward and made another note in his book. "And you sold the car to Mr. Baxter two days ago?"

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“Yes.”

“Did you try to sell it to anybody else?”

“No.”

“Why is this? You had to repay this clergyman in a week, hadn’t you?”

“Yes,” sighed the youth, “but I caught a cold and was laid up for a week then. Just my luck. Then I took the car over to Mr. Baxter’s and he bought it and gave me a cheque for it straightforwardly, a hundred pounds, but I can’t cash it till tomorrow. I shall pay Mr. Tillion then, all right.”

“Have you got that cheque with you?”

Cox hauled a wallet out of his hip pocket and handed the cheque to the inspector.

“So,” said the inspector, after tapping his teeth reflectively with the lead pencil, “you have had this car in your possession for ten days?”

The boy agreed.

Inspector Catchpole cleared his throat: “Well, that car, I may tell you, was stolen from a gentleman in Nottingham. We’ll get after this Mr. Robinson—he sounds a bit like Jack Robinson, ha, ha, ha!—and you must give my man all the assistance you can.”

Only then did Cox seem to realize the calamity that had befallen him.

“Stolen!” he whispered. “But it was his own car; he *said* it was.”

“He stole it in Nottingham,” the inspector said laconically.

“I thought,” said Cox, “do you know what I thought? I thought it was Mr. Tillion had put you on to me because I

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hadn't paid him. But I'd been laid up and I can't get the money till to-morrow."

"I must take charge of this cheque," said the ruthless Catchpole, "and I'm very much afraid you've lost your eighty pounds, very much afraid."

"But—but I *must* pay him, sir, I must; he's a poor old toff and I must pay him back."

"Who did you borrow the other ten pounds from?"

The lad dropped his cap, picked it up again and flushed.

"My sister," he said.

"Is she at home?"

"No," said Cox, "we don't live together. She's in business up in the City in an Insurance office. We haven't got any parents living. They died when we was kids. She's in lodgings. How am I to pay her back, sir? She ain't got any more money than I have. I must pay her back; she's been like a mother to me."

Inspector Catchpole closed the examination and Cox stumbled out of the police station, alone.

"I must see that clergyman," said Catchpole; "we'll just drive round there, Mr. Baxter."

The Reverend Timothy Tillion was a husky cleric with a face of inhuman pinkness and a tendency to hysteria. He confirmed Cox's story, but when he heard the upshot he clenched his febrile hands and whispered hoarsely: "My God! But, inspector! Fifty pounds! What is to be done? The horrible villainy!"

Rennie drove the inspector back to town.

"Poor little Cox!" he said as they swept along, "he's been properly let in."

Mr. Catchpole opened his resilient jaws very wide and grasped

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cheek and chin firmly with his fingers, as if he wanted to remould them nearer to his heart's desire.

"Humph!" he sniffed.

They drew up at the splendid premises of Baxter & Brabazon. The stolen car had already been impounded by the police, and the inspector walked off with his hands wedged deep in his overcoat pockets, coughing "Ahem! ahem!"

"Phew!" muttered Rennie. "Close shave for my hundred pounds. But I *am* sorry for that poor kid. Eighty pounds! Why, it would just about put paid to *me!*"

At night Rennie went to the popular café and sat for hours staring despondently at every girl that entered or left the place. The orchestra played and played; doubtless many of the people were consuming tomato soup and whitebait, and there were surely hundreds at the theatre applauding *Macbeth*. She too, somewhere, was alive and beautiful, but utterly regardless of him; she didn't care for him. The world was different, the air empty. At last he got up and walked moodily home to his lodgings in a great square. He hurried up the steps, but when he found there was no letter awaiting him he went out again. The sky was full of rain that did not fall, the air was full of wind that did not rejoice, and from the desolate trees the dead leaves poured like black snow. He marched round and round the iron railings, his mind ceaselessly chanting that old lament:

*And wilt thou leave me thus? Say nay! Say nay!*

For several days he haunted the café noon and night. Each night turned him into a dispirited man, but every morn found

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him eager for the noon again, when he could go to the café for a cup of tea and palely applaud the orchestra; or the night again, when he could sit there and watch and wait and pick his teeth and sigh.

One evening, for no reason at all save unhappiness, he wandered into a church. In one of the aisles stood a man, a beadle or something, with a large frame filled with small lighted candles. A number of people were buying candles and placing them upon selected altars. As Baxter watched, the man smiled at him and inconsequently he, too, took a lighted candle. Then he wondered why he had done this, and what the deuce he should do with it. Blow it out and put it in his pocket? He approached an unfriended altar upon which hung a copy of a Virgin and Child painted by Luini. The Virgin was beautiful and reminded him, only reminded him, of the girl he had lost, so he put his candle there and stood and bowed his head and shut his eyes. But his mind was profanely occupied and his heart held no prayer; he could recall only the passionate entreaty

*Say nay! Say nay!*

A day later he was shocked to receive a summons to appear at the police court in connection with a charge against Robert Cox of having in his possession a motor-car, well knowing same to have been stolen.

“God Almighty!” groaned Baxter, “the poor little rat! He’s innocent, I know he is, I’m sure he is.”

But he had to go, and as he sat in the well of the court and listened he felt that he was in a museum, that he too, like everybody else—the lawyers, his worship, the bobbies, Catchpole,

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and the listeners—was just an exhibit, and that if he could only *see* himself he would find a neat label stuck upon his body, with his pedigree, his meaning, and the place where he had been found.

Robert Cox was differently dressed in neat, even smart clothes, but he generally sat with his elbows on his knees, dangling a hat.

Rennie gave his evidence, the owner of the car gave his evidence—oh, dear, he said his car was worth four hundred pounds, and Rennie knew it was true!—and the Reverend Timothy Tillion gave his evidence.

“Why did you lend this money to Cox?” asked the prosecuting barrister.

“I did it just to help a deserving and hardworking young man.”

“Was there any other—er, consideration?”

“Oh, he did offer to pay me a little interest for the loan, and so I said he should repay me in a week and give me five pounds in addition.”

“You know, I suppose, that that rate of interest works out at more than five hundred per cent per annum.”

“Oh, no!” said the Reverend Timothy, “it was just five pounds.”

His worship finally decreed the charge proven. Even a schoolboy, he said, must have known that such a car was worth four or five times the paltry sum alleged to have been paid for it. He gave Cox the option of paying a fine of fifty pounds or going to prison for three months.

Cox went on dangling his hat between his knees for a few moments, then a warder took him away.

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Before the next case began Baxter blundered out of the court and went into the great hall, where there were groups of whispering people, mostly women, and numbers of policemen, mostly without helmets. Inspector Catchpole was there, and Baxter asked him: "Could I see young Cox?"

"Yes," drawled the inspector dubiously, "come along." Downstairs they went to a locked apartment called the gaoler's room, a dim high-windowed place inhabited now by a warder and Cox, who sat hunched on a bench in his characteristic pose, the hat between his knees. There he was to remain until his destination was decided upon, or until the fine, if it were forthcoming, was paid.

"It's hard luck, laddie," began Baxter. "What can you do about it?"

The youth shrugged his shoulders: "Nothing."

"Can't you raise the money?"

No, he couldn't raise any more money.

"But you can't go to prison, boy. Haven't you got any friends?"

A dubious shake of the head. "Only my sister, and I've let her in for ten pounds, all she had in the world. She can't help me, and it will break her heart, this will. You know, I never dreamed that Robinson was a wrong 'un—course I can see it now—and he's done me in properly. I thought he was a toff. It's a bit of bad luck, 'cause I'm only a beginner, and now I'm going to prison. But there's no sense to it," he cried. "I've lost my eighty pounds and I'm innocent, but I've got to go to prison. There's no sense to it, is there? I never knew the car was stolen. How could I know? I'm innocent as a dog."

## WILT THOU LEAVE ME THUS?

"I know," said Rennie. "And I wish to God I could do it for you, but I can't. I'm as near broke as you are."

"That's all right, Mr. Baxter," said the boy, and after a few moments' silence he asked: "Have you ever been to prison?"

Rennie shook his head.

"I wonder what it's like," Cox continued; "not much, I expect."

"Is there anything at all I can do for you now, before I go?" asked Baxter.

There was no answer for many moments—Cox sat with his elbows still on his knees—and then Rennie heard a faint pit-pat on the floor. The youth was crying. Baxter tried to comfort him, but he could not help him, and his own heart was so charged with emotion that he dared not stay a moment longer or he too would be weeping. And he hated tears.

"Good-bye, old man," he said. Without raising his head the boy silently put out his hand and Rennie, clasping it with a pressure that was inexplicably fond, turned away. As the warder unlocked the door Rennie looked back. The boy was standing up, and still holding his hat with both hands, was staring at Baxter with a sort of wonder, a look that begged him not to leave him there, a mute prayer to detain him; and once more into Baxter's mind the old poem trailed its tremulous pathetic beauty:

*And wilt thou leave me thus? Say nay!*

The gaoler locked him out and he rushed up into the great hall and looked at the clock. It was nearly one; he was hungry, but there was something he had to do at once, a piece of stark

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

madness, but he had to do it: there was no one else. Pulling a cheque-book from his breast pocket, he pored over the scribbled stubs, closed a calculating eye, and at last, after scratching his head and clenching his teeth, he dashed down the steps of the police court into the street, where he nearly knocked down a man with bent knees who was passing with a crate of cauliflower on his head. Taxi! taxi! Away to the bank went Baxter and drew out fifty pounds in bank-notes. "Now I am done," he muttered as he went swiftly to court, again, "ruined, broke to the world!"

But the officials had all gone to lunch and he had to wait an interminable half-hour before he could pay the fine. Not till then did he hasten once more to the gaoler's room.

"It's all right," he positively bawled across the room as he was admitted, "it's paid!"

But, God in heaven! what was this? Cox was huddled on the bench, but sitting there with her arms round his shoulders was the peerless long-sought girl in the black velvet jacket with fur at the neck and cuffs. In a flash he realized that this was Cox's sister. Of course, she had been his sister all along! In some mysterious way he had seen her reflected in the boy.

With his hat in his hand he walked quite slowly towards them and they both stood up.

"How do you do?" he said timidly, holding out his hand to this lovely one. "It is all right now, they will let us go in a few minutes."

"Who paid it?" asked the boy.

"I managed to rake it up," said Rennie.

"I'll pay you back, sir."

## WILT THOU LEAVE ME THUS?

"Foo! don't worry," retorted Rennie. "And how *do* you do?" he said once more to the grave gentle creature before him. "What a miracle! I had given up hope of ever finding you again."

The surprise of the encounter and the circumstances of their new meeting seemed to confound the girl, but she recovered and thanked him. Rennie burbled on regardless of her brother, of the warder, of everything but her.

"I looked for you everywhere. I have simply lived in that café ever since, but I never saw you. Don't you go there now? I wondered if you would drop me a note. Great cheek for me to dump my card on you the way I did, wasn't it, but I am such a fool. And I did want to know you. Did you mind?"

"No," said the girl. "No, it was very kind of you; I wanted to meet you. Only"—she brightened and glowed—"it was so silly, I had no visiting-cards—never have had any—but I ordered some the very next day so that I could send you mine—isn't it silly!—but there was a long delay before I got them and then, what do you think? they had printed my name wrong."

"What *is* your name?" asked the impetuous Rennie.

"Lucy Cox. They printed it all wrong, so I sent them back, and they took a longer time still to reprint them. I was so angry: it was like something trying to prevent me knowing you. And when they did come at last they came on the very day I heard of Bobby's trouble, and I was too upset to do anything then. Perhaps I could have written to you; I wanted to, but I did not know how to begin. I could not say 'Miss Cox presents her compliments, etc., to Mr. Baxter and hopes, etc., etc.' could I?"

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

"Have you got one now?" interrupted Rennie.

"A card? Yes." And searching in her bag—yes, her finger-nails were still pointed—she produced and gave him a card.

"Thank you," he laughed, "now I cannot lose you again."

Smiling gravely at him, Lucy asked: "What have you been doing since then?"

"Oh," he answered, like some clown in a novelette, "I have thought and dreamed only of you."

Lucy put her hand through his arm: "I am glad, I am very glad."

"Have you thought of me, Lucy?"

She closed her eyes and pressed closer to his side.

Then a hatless policeman came to announce the release of the captive, and they all three together hurried up to the hall, Lucy exclaiming: "What shall we do now?" and Rennie and Bobbie echoing "Yes, what shall we do?"

"Let's," cried Rennie, "do something perfectly damnable deadly!"

"Let's!" agreed Lucy, hugging his arm eagerly.

In the hall they ran into Inspector Catchpole.

"Well," he said to Rennie, "so the fine's paid. You paid it, didn't you?"

"Yes," said beaming Rennie, "the luckiest thing I ever did in my life."

The inspector nodded without enthusiasm.

"Well, I could do no less," explained Baxter, "for it was me laid the information against him—I had to."

"Ah, yes," said the inspector, "that reminds me. I'll be round

## WILT THOU LEAVE ME THUS?

to see you in a day or two. There was a reward offered for that car, and it's due to you."

"Reward!" screamed Rennie.

"Oh! How much?" asked Lucy.

"Fifty pounds," said Inspector Catchpole cheerily, "I'll be round with it to-morrow or the day after. So long!"

J. C. SQUIRE  
THE MUSE ABSENT

**L**OVE'S Twin, the child of Indolence,  
Has now for long forsaken me;  
Duty, routine, and common sense  
Have beaten me and taken me.

Necessity, that knows no law,  
With iron rule oppresses me;  
Sealed are the ancient founts of awe,  
No stranger wind caresses me.

But when this rigid road is past,  
Aeolian airs may breathe for me  
With that old tenderness at last,  
And autumn laurels wreath for me:

The clarions of a final dawn  
May challenge me and waken me,  
When all that hate, or love, or fawn  
Forgetting, have forsaken me.

# STORM JAMESON

## THE DOOR

IT SEEMED to Matthew Grace, when he came to die, that all his life behind him was without substance or colour. He was like a man looking down over a familiar valley in those moments between dusk and night when fields, woods, hillsides, and the roofs of farms seem lying in a light that has the quality of still, brown water. In this subtle and deceitful light a few objects stand out with startling clearness. His eye could rest on three such. The fourth was this place and this moment in which he stood looking.

He was now twenty-nine, and the first of these moments was eleven years behind him on a morning in May in the year sixteen hundred and ninety-one. It came readily enough to his eyes, its colours winking at him with the very green of grass, the flash of light from a drop of dew, the white of hawthorn. What he had forgotten stepped behind what he recalled, and the moment, fresh as the day it was minted, sparkled before him. It does not come so easily for us. Sunk in the centuries, one moment in the life of Matthew Grace. I ask you: with what patience, what cunning, it must be waited for, cast for, solicited?

Softly then, disturbing as little as may be the spring mornings which, since that one, have buried it under new blossom, covered it with fresh mould and so thrust it down and effaced it that no

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

trace remains of all its turbulent energy which unfolded leaves, freshened streams, burst buds, and quickened earth as if sap need never fall again or maturity lead on decay—let us try for it. But first, to catch Matthew Grace himself, Matthew at eighteen. I beg one moment from you, death, but one moment, from you and your livelier brother; be a little careless and let it drop between the two of you so that I can snatch it up, and in that instant see Matthew Grace living, warm with life, his eyes open on a corner of a Cotswold valley, his feet on its green earth. Imperceptible, sunk in old mould, their brief pressure must remain, like those tracks made by the feet of Roman legionaires, hidden from a near vision and clear to hawks and airmen. Surely if I give myself up to time, there will come a place and a moment when I shall see the grass of a Cotswold hillside slowly straightening after the pressure of Matthew Grace's feet?

Time will show. Patience, friends, the show is continuous.

I have disturbed more than I meant to. There is no getting at Matthew Grace without troubling others, alive (and no more surprised at it than we are to be living now) in a Cotswold village that same May: his father, John Grace the stone-carver, his mother who had been housekeeper at the Hall and could have looked higher than Grace, but did not. It was his mother's connection with the Hall, and its ineffaceable stamp on her, that had made her children and John Grace's what they were, and fitted them for the positions into which they stepped naturally as soon as the time came for them to be placed in the world. Matthew's elder sister was housekeeper to the Vicar. The younger was maid to Lord Marsh's new wife. His brother, three years older than Matthew, soon followed her to the Hall

## THE DOOR

as groom. Only Matthew remained at home, a little to his mother's disquietude, because he had showed so remarkable an aptitude for his father's trade that it was plain folly to turn him from it. Yet he was, of all her children, the one that closest resembled her quick habit of body and speech: the grace she had learned was native in him. He had beauty too, above that of youth, an easy carriage of his body, a brown slender face, and reddish-brown hair that fell into his bright eyes. His left hand was lightly scarred, the teeth-marks of a vixen cub he brought home and tamed. She would lie supine with pleasure across his legs while he stroked and rubbed her belly. Sometimes she turned her head and looked at him with eyes so like his own that it shocked his mother to see the two staring at each other. She imagined that her son's eyes were brighter and quicker than the vixen's.

He worked the day through with his father, hard at it up at the new house Lord Marsh was building for himself on the rise of the hill, the Stuart house at its foot being, on the word of his new wife, damp from the streams running through the gardens and spanned with miniature stone arches yellowed with lichen and mossy where the mouldings were deep enough. The day's work done, John Grace took himself off, but oftener than not the boy stayed behind, working until the light played tricks with him, then lingering on the hill until what of day remained ebbed into the west, and lay in pools of clear yellow light among the grey reaches of the sky. As he went slowly down the hill to the village the silence breathed in his ear; a bird stirred in its nest, a shadow moved across the path in the shape of a stoat, the white owl that hunted the upper fields broke cover and fled

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

into the darkness when he passed under its habited tree, and as he got near enough the first cottages to hear voices he heard, a softer more insistent current, the crying of water running over stones. When he stepped into the candle-lit room where his mother sat his eyes were slits of bright light, more like a wild animal's, I give you his mother's word for it, than anything else. He went to bed with the window of his room ajar. As soon as he slept she closed it against the night air and its doubtful influences, and prayed herself to sleep, to be reassured afresh every morning by his slow-smiling, wide-eyed look at the new day.

But this morning in May? Wait, wait, I all but have my hand on it. A bud bursts, a leaf uncurls, softly, slowly, as if the pressure of all the uncounted moments between us and it were lifting. The air freshens in an emptier world. A clear voice tries over a line of a song, breaks off, begins again and recalls the whole verse.

The Vicar (he has been tossing in his linen sheets half the night after reading a letter brought late the day before by a messenger riding from Oxford) rose that morning at five, and calling his housekeeper to dress herself quickly, he gave her the letter to take to her brother Matthew; it was to be carried to groom Grace with instructions to put it privately into Lord Marsh's hands as soon as he woke. Matthew Grace heard her voice under his window a moment in his sleep and the next broad awake, having turned over in his bed and out of it between one breath and the next. A few minutes after he was in the stable-yard at the Hall, and the letter was another Grace nearer Lord Marsh: Matthew, without knowing it, stood breast high

## THE DOOR

in the stream that ran from a king in exile to friends he had in Westminster.

Had he known it he would not have remembered it at the end of his life, as he remembered the moment that tripped him up between the Hall and the village. He took a short way across fields and came to the first of the small running streams that lace the village with bright water so that nowhere can there fail at any turn a gleam and a whisper: in sunlight fine swords of light thrust and quiver on every side of a man that, like Matthew Grace, has eyes for them, and on clear nights he walks thick in stars. The narrow stream by which he stood ran through meadows, and it pleased him to see the stiff lances of the grass turned all one way by the onset of the water. He stared at it for a long time, frowning, then glanced idly at the rounded hills behind the village, and was all at once swept into a passion of delight by the line of their strong green curves against the blue sky. Between the bright shock of the running water and the still force of the green mass thrust against the sky his mind stood as still as his body, pleasure pricking him in every part. He was aware in that moment of everything between the two, the hedges heavy with may, the short-stemmed purple orchis and pale cuckoo-flower in the grass, the new green of trees, the violet shadows across the lower slopes of the hills, as though he had put them there. He was aware of himself too, as if he had just been born into the world: behind him lay the eternity of his childhood, already dimming in memory, divided from him by the bright spaces of this moment to which all his life until now had been but the antechamber and dark entry. The moment passed, leaving him not empty as such moments commonly do,

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

but profoundly content. Stepping across the stream, he went home then.

He had to wait a year for the second of his moments.

That it came with a woman is natural enough, and needs no circumstance to tell what every person knows best of himself. What could be expected—except that it had happened sooner? To be brief, he had looked at the unmarried girls of his village only often enough to know that he had no interest in what he could have so easily. This was much his own fault in so far as he invited with his eyes what he denied behind them. He followed many a foolish girl to her bed and did not know it.

In March a young sewing-maid came to the Hall from London. She was short, with a body at once slight and sturdy, a pale face and pointed chin, wide black eyes, and black hair cut to her neck. When groom Grace first saw her he laughed and looked the other way, and so did most other men. Matthew Grace saw her, made a note of her chin for one of the gutter-heads on the south front of the new house, and having, so to speak, been delivered of her in stone, found himself still heavy with her. After that he did not see her for a week, when he came up with her one evening, walking quickly towards the Hall. She made no effort to escape him and he led her round the bastion of the hill to a point where they would have seen the Hall and its gardens laid out below them if it had not by now been too dark to see anything but the shapes of the hills against the sky and its stars. She had nothing to say, which first displeased and then charmed him. Her eyes, which she kept steadily fixed on him, were alive and seemed nearly half her white face, and he could read what answers he chose in them. He chose to

## THE DOOR

read submission, and when they reached the first outlying barn of the Hall he stood still, and lifted her onto a narrow trestle standing along it. She flattened herself against the lichenied stone and looked at him out of her black eyes, still silent. Matthew Grace laughed. Now that her face was on a level with his, he could by leaning against her fasten her between the wall and himself, and he did it with a slow unkind pressure so that she should feel for herself his need. When he lifted her down he did not carry her into the barn as he had first meant. The ground was covered with a heavy dew, which he noticed and was surprised at. He was very deliberate, handling her gently, and it surprised him too that he was cool enough to remain conscious, and with the utmost sharpness, of his identity, penetrated through as he was by pleasure.

Lying quiescent beside her, he lost himself briefly, but he had wit enough to know that he had found her, and he laid an arm across her to prevent her moving until he could do without her. The night had never seemed so quiet to him nor the ground so cool. The girl had said nothing yet and wishing she would he jumped up and turned his back on her. When he turned round again she was standing in the opening of the barn. He went to her and she put both her hands on him, still with her air of submissive pride, and asked him: what had he done? This ridiculous question started the boy in him, and he laughed and caught her in his arms. "Done? Why, an act of Grace," he said, and saw her smile. And that memory remained with him to the end of his life—the dark rectangle of the doorway, a blacker shadow on the black shadow of the barn, and the girl's sudden smile. It warmed him again when he came to die.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

What is memory and what is thought? There are no instruments so delicate that they can recover, from the brain of a dead man, the image of a smile that while he lived he had there, and knew he had. Death broke the cup but what became of the spilled water? The hawthorn turns brown, dies, and rots into the soil of future springs; its fragrance took to the air and vanished on a journey that for all I know may bring it round where it started, and I on any night in May come on the ghost of a flower that died in Chaucer's garden. What road did Matthew Grace's memories take when their house came about their ears? If I could scale that out I would put myself in their way and so have at one meeting what now I have to grope for in uncharted space, find by hazard, and lay time by the heels on such evidences as would not serve to indict an instant of it.

By the heels, did I say? Then I thought much too well of myself when I said it. The Middle Ages (and all others) sleep in my brain, but I can never come up with them: though I find the form still warm the hare is gone.

Matthew Grace is married. His life swings now between his young silent wife and his work. A cornice he began severely turns half against his will into a procession of spring flowers, bud, stem, and leaf, and Lord Marsh's architect steps sharply up behind him—and thinks better of telling him to keep closer to his rule. Cloudless skies break in the first rains of summer; the wood of young birches between the village and the great house smells of mould and violet leaves, and Matthew Grace crossing it a month after his wedding sees the first wet clusters of honeysuckle in the hedge. When the weather clears, heavy mists fill the valley until close on noon. The trees are now past their first

## THE DOOR

youth and the dry ditches overflow in meadowsweet and other rank sweet-smelling weeds. Summer grows a thought too ripe among rustling grasses and hedges hung with the webs of harvesting spiders, and one morning, while he dawdles in the grey cloisters of the birches, Matthew sees a leaf from a tree in front of him begin its slow descent: he carries it some way with him, poring over its fine tracery of vein before he abandons it to the earth. The days now have a sharp clarity, blurred before evening by an almost imperceptible breath, when the ground gives off its stored warmth. Frosts crack the hardened earth and vanish in milder airs. The bare stems of the birches run with rain and the track through the wood becomes a marsh in which Matthew Grace's feet tread small pools that reflect a limpid light from the washed skies. The birch-trees are like women wringing out their long hair in the wind. How soft the west wind is: it blows fitfully for the first weeks of the new year, rising and dying away, and Matthew Grace's son is born on a night so quiet that he can hear the dozen different notes of as many streams, and a horseman passing the village on the main road a mile away sounds above the footsteps of the women moving over his head. Light is welling up in the valley before his child is brought down to sleep by the fire and he is invited to comfort his wife. A candle still burns in the room, and when he moves to put it out she shakes her head with so strange a look of terror in the black depths of her eyes that he lets it alone, and sitting down beside the bed covers her hand with his until she falls asleep.

Light comes every day earlier, a clear soft light, spilling over into mornings filled with the sounds of running water and of birds. Work on the house goes quickly. The stone tiles (tiles

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

enough for five acres of roof) are brought out of the great barn and stacked against the west front. Days of clear golden air are followed by nights in which the stars seem closer to the earth. They give off a soft radiance which so subtly penetrates the air that a branch lying across the road at night is clearly visible fifty yards away. A bud breaks and a leaf uncurls. Another spring is folding down on the second of Matthew Grace's moments, like a petal turning back before it falls, and then another, and a third and a fourth. What a clumsy instrument is thought. The infinite gradations by which the petal unfolds and its delicate voluptuous stretchings in the light to the instant when it floats off are as much past its reckoning as the grosser computations of the stars. Matthew Grace's wife standing in the orchard of his mother's house in the fifth April after her marriage sees one white petal begin its subtle descent and watches it to the ground in the time it takes her to turn an end of her black hair round her finger, but what a chronicle of events I could compile out of that same moment; the child moved in her body, John Grace turned over in his bed and spoke for the last time before he died, the Vicar sneezed, standing at the open window of his study and drew it quickly to, Lord Marsh's agent signed a letter requesting the loan of a stone-carver from Oxford to fill John Grace's place, and Matthew Grace stepped back to look at the great west door of the new Hall, round which he had begun to wake out of the stone so intricate a pattern of bud, leaf, bird, and insect, that he progressed not above an inch in a week. Five years will finish it, he thinks, and his mind sees it complete, down to the ultimate bud. He cannot call up five minutes of his past with as bold a clarity. Nor I, nor you, and his friends who

## THE DOOR

saw Socrates die, when they came to tell of it, had him die again another way as if their memories had drunk hemlock with his. What a book I could write if I had not forgotten almost everything that has happened to me. Lord Marsh was a politician and a soldier of importance, and left letters and records fuller than most, but he omitted what messages his men sent home from Flanders and what songs they had to march by, and what his maids gossiped under his window and whether there were perch in the mill-pond in his day. I wish he had not.

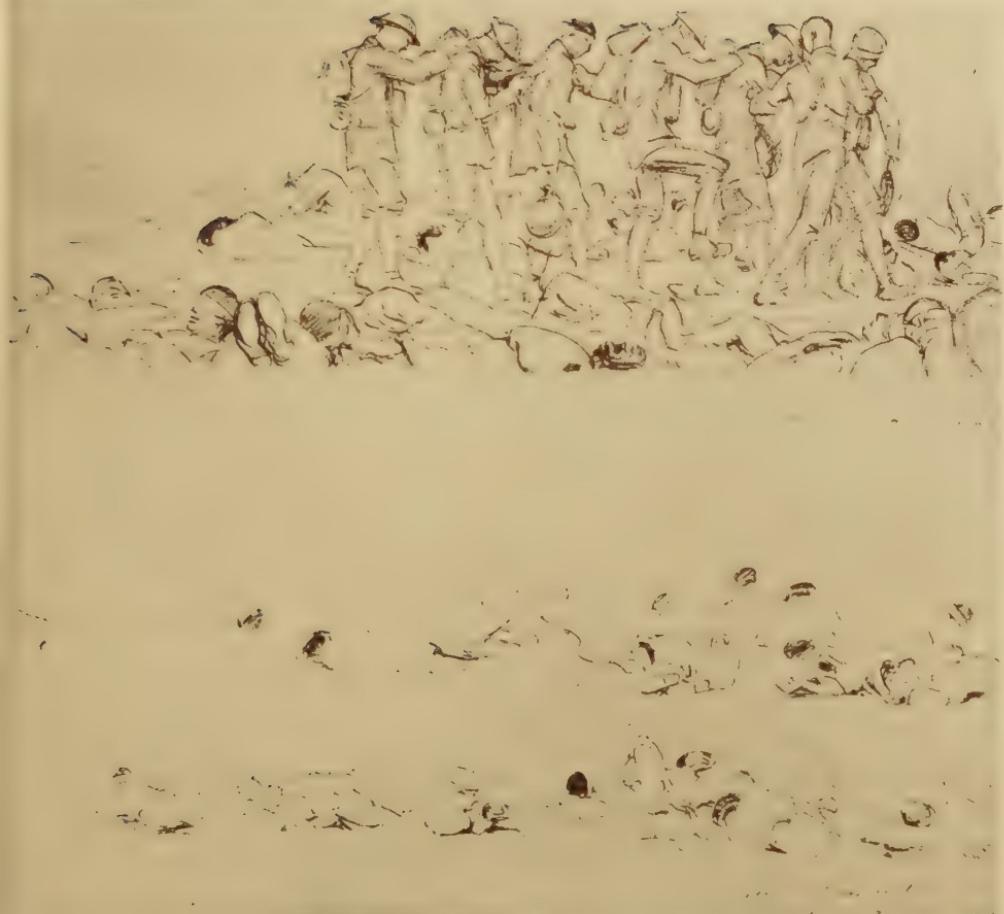
Matthew Grace has been married these five years.'

He found his wife kinder than he had thought women were. He had been silent with her at first but before long his thoughts slid into hers as naturally as his body, wearied at night, folded itself round her meagre curves. He would come in to find his meal waiting on the table for him, and he ate it in silence while she watched him, her hands folded on her knee. She spoke very little but when she got up to clear away and put her hand on him before starting, a feeling of warmth and ease flowed from her body into his; it loosened his mind and he began to talk to her like a man talking to himself. To come home and find one of the neighbours in his house annoyed him past any pretence of civility; he sprawled about the room, letting his resentment fairly edge them out of it. When they had gone and his wife scolded him for it he sat smiling until she gave him up, comically baffled.

The day the stone-carver arrived from Oxford to finish John Grace's work Matthew Grace came home early. He sat heavily down and said nothing until he had fed. Then he told her about the fellow. He was big, he said, yellow haired and blue-

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

eyed, with a fresh face, an East Anglian, perpetually smiling. The young women were sharp-set for him already, dawdling in his way when he left work, and laughing fit to burst their laces. She said she knew and that he disliked the man. "Ay, and so I do," he answered, surprised at her quickness. It pleased him and put him in a good humour at once, but in the morning he found he liked the East Anglian still less. All day long his dislike fretted him and when the man pressed a hairy thumb down on Matthew's work he jerked the great hand away. The other stepped back, his pink and white reddening hotly, but Matthew did not look up. After that the stranger was round at the west door every day, watching Matthew's patient labours. He enjoyed the Cotswold man's dislike of him: it pleased his ingenuous vanity to think of Matthew as a butt for his native witticisms, too stupid as he was to guess the danger he was in. Matthew Grace's hate lay coiled in his stomach like the adder he had seen that morning curled between the roots of a tree in the sun. He felt it move there at the very sight of the East Anglian's big body and long yellow head, and the next day when he saw his enemy coming he squatted down on his heels, doubling his stomach over it. The East-Anglian said nothing, but smilingly thrust his foot under the other's knee-joint and jerking his leg from under him had him sprawling on the ground. Matthew Grace was up and had struck him before he fairly got his balance and how poor his chance was he knew in the same moment. No match as a wrestler for Matthew Grace, he was thrown with a broken back in less than ten minutes. He was not dead. He lay there on the terrace, his face upturned to as clear a sky as he had ever seen. He could have spoken but he would not;



*John Sargent, R. A.*



## THE DOOR

he looked at the Cotswold man with a cold bitter anger, and this Matthew Grace remembered to the end of his life, the clear light, in which every object was sharpened and precise, and the dying man's blue eyes from which, turned on him to the last, the light went out suddenly.

His own mind was clear and his body rested and relieved. He spent the night securely locked in a cellar below the Hall kitchens. About two o'clock in the morning for the first time he remembered his wife and began to hammer on the door and went on hammering until he was clean exhausted. She was standing by the side of the road when they set off with him for Oxford. She neither moved nor spoke, but he felt a horrible wrench and sickness as he passed her, and he could not get rid of her black eyes and white pointed face until he reached Oxford. But the horror of being shut up there drove her and every other memory out of his head. Stench, and the heat of the overcrowded jail, he could have endured, and even the company he was in: a few too sunk to speak and the rest finding in uttering obscenities and as heartily as they could acting them relief from the certainty that in no long time they would either be dead or transported. Matthew Grace neither saw nor heard them. His mind was closed to everything but the knowledge that he could not get out. He raved and was whipped for it, and he was still lying two hours afterwards where they had set him down after his whipping, talking to his wife in the speech of his village. That his head was still on his body and his tongue wagging in it was as much as could be said for him. A week after that he heard himself condemned without interest, and was not more moved when, the day before he should have been hanged,

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he was fetched out of prison and told that he had been reprieved for five years, to finish the great door. Lord Marsh had done this for himself; his brother magistrates readily agreed with him that it was misfortune enough for him to have lost two highly skilled stone-carvers off his house at once without having its west front spoiled by another man botching up what Matthew Grace had conceived.

He was taken back to his village the same day, leaving Oxford by the west road and passing through Northleach at sunset. And here he came to life again. He had a glass of ale in the street and stood looking up the village; the grey stone of the houses was washed with light, it lay about them and behind them and seemed pouring through them: a miracle. It was deep night when he got to his village and was let go to his own house. He stumbled over the step and walked clumsily across the room to his wife. He did not want to eat and left a meal on the table untouched. He would not let her clear it away: was she afraid to go to bed with him, he asked her stupidly. She was afraid of him, a little, not so much of him as of his body which came fumbling blindly for hers. He was not deliberately being unkind, she thought, but he seemed shameless and did and said to her things that shrivelled whatever it was in her could be hurt without her body being hurt. But she submitted mutely and even began to feel a secret pride. She would have had him do worse. If he was damned she was too and if he was degraded so was she and glad to be. She was bound to him by his need and by something in herself that rejoiced in being debased to any uses by him; she went down with him to the pit, lost in him. He collapsed suddenly and lay against her, half-whimpering

## THE DOOR

with fatigue. She was his mother now; she soothed his shivering sweating body with her hands in the darkness and talked to him: when he was asleep she let herself fall asleep beside him, like a stone falling into a well, an instant of blackness and then sleep.

This Matthew Grace troubles me. Do I make too much of what I know? It is little enough, yet who knows more, unless it were a Cotswold hill, where green and grey and yellow fit into each other like the feathers in a bird's wing and the hollows fill with violet shadows? Matthew Grace was twenty-four when he came back from Oxford, finely made and slender, his reddish-brown hair as thick as before he went. But what use to be particular if I cannot bring you to see the brightness of an eye, the rose under the tanned skin, and the subtle articulation of a leg, Matthew Grace himself, alive, and not as a man doomed to die —in which he is no different from the rest of us? There was a road he took every morning from his mother's house (he had moved there with his family, thinking he could leave them in it better than in any other), which ran for a few yards between stone walls, yellowed, traced over with tiny creeping plants, ivy-leaved toad-flax and such, and the gleaming tracks of snails, then came out into the village street between the houses built of that Gloucestershire stone which has the sun in it, turned again into a narrow lane hedged with beech, and from there went on between small running streams, none so wide he could not leap them, but spanned by the slender arches he never saw without delight; here he paused and stood looking at the water running under his feet, dove-grey under a cloudy sky, under a clear one a limpid no-colour stained like a nightjar's egg with

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blue and brown, and in sunshine ruffled and stirred with living light. His road after that lay uphill, and now he avoided the short cut through the birch wood, not liking to lose sight of the sky and the shapes of the hills, reaching the west front of the house by the upper drive, at a turn in which he saw spread out below him a prospect of three counties, smooth and varied as a park with wood and pasture and bright water. He lingered, when he could see to work no longer, until the last ripple of light sank from the sky, and the country became as mysterious as that other to which, whether he thought of it or not, his feet were turned, its hills daily closer, its tracks running he knew not where, its streams too broad for his leaping. Only the stars were familiar, and as he walked down the hill to the village he kept a wary eye on them, the last stable things in a universe from which his eyes brought him no witness that was not transitory and his ears no word whose echo was not too soon gone. If no one was abroad in the village he stooped to one of the streams like an idle traveller, and sometimes laid his hand on a house wall, passing it gently over the lichenized stone.

He felt airs and winds more sharply than other men; rain was cooler on his face and the colours of things brighter. Where a neighbour said: "A clear sky," his upward glance took in infinite gradations of blue and grey folding into each other as one ripple of water into the next; his mind was a glass in which a June meadow seemed a freshly woven tapestry, every colour sharp and distinct, green, dun and grey of grass, purple of vetch, blue of heartsease, yellow of trefoil, and the blazing whiteness of the marguerites, an intense burning white like the noon sky; he stored his memory with such bright trifles as the colours of a

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trout darting from side to side of a tranquil stream and a hill-side covered with long grass that lay over under the wind.

On summer evenings he might come home as late as he liked but his neighbours were still abroad. They turned over such droppings of news as groom Grace brought them from the Hall; women gossiped, lads lay on the edges of the streams or peacocked the length of the street, and a girl laughed. Matthew Grace stopped to watch a one-legged man drawing a plan of Namur in the white dust; he tried to picture the foreign town from his friend's confused words but could think only that it was very like Oxford. Another man asked his opinion of a farm, reputed unlucky, and two women standing in the shadow of a doorway reminded each other as he passed of a spell against whitlows, but he forgot it before he reached home. The new sharpness and brightness of the world of things was paid for in his mind by a slow withdrawal of the other world of persons; his friends and neighbours had grown distant (though they did not know it), and spoke to him across a gulf of which he alone was conscious and that there were no bridges. He was persistent now in commanding his children (when he should be dead) to anyone he thought likely to help him, but he could not for his life have recalled that one of them stammered and another had a trick of staring bright-eyed at every new thing he discovered.

Even his wife withdrew every day a little farther from his touch and sight, though she was all he wanted in a woman, and the only woman he had thought of since his marriage. When he came in at night and saw her there his heart moved in his body, and yet she was a stranger and not his wife. He had no wife and she no husband. He lay beside her on the feather mattress

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of his mother's best bed and forgot her long before she slept and his body was released from the light pressure of her hand. The earliest light woke him and he listened until the first clear bird-notes pierced him with their mortal sweetness and melancholy, then left her quietly and went out. She woke every morning in an empty room; in her heart she could not forgive him for that, and yet she could not deny him in it either. She forced herself to deny the division between them, though to do it killed a part of her own life; she was marked Matthew Grace's, a woman moulded to his purposes, a lost woman, she thought.

Lord Marsh moved into his new house but the great west door remained closed. Matthew Grace, undisturbed by such persons as came to stare and exclaim and calculate (as often as not in his hearing) how many months or weeks he had left—the circumstances pricked them—spent his days with it, cutting deeply into the stone so that the pattern came out in the boldness of life, yet with a delicacy that made comparison with Mr. Grinling Gibbons's work on the panelling within apt. The stone was warmer than the wood.

There was a day and a moment when Matthew Grace knew he had done. He stood for a long time looking not at his work, which now that it was finished had little more interest for him, but at the door itself, of lime-wood, panelled. A trick of the afternoon light could make it seem ajar, and as he stared the miracle happened and the great door moved noiselessly an inch on its hinges. He had too much wit to give himself the lie by touching it, preferring his fantasy. And here, walking like a man who knows his job, comes groom Grace, bringing Lord Marsh's horses round to the south door, and

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speaks to him, and he answers from the other side of that impassable gulf which until this moment he had supposed dug between the man who knew when he was going to die and his neighbours who did not. Now he saw clearly that it was no more and no other than the common lot.

He turned his back on the door, and like a man starting on a journey began to sort over what he had. The great heat of the day had drawn a white mist out of the ground which was now lifting and going off by ragged companies, and a rent torn in it just below showed him, drowsy and winking in the sun, a wide corner of England between the Cotswolds and the downs, spires and farms and a master river, until he could see far up on the north the black crests of the Malverns and guess that from him to them the hawthorn ran unbroken to the very edge of England, and beyond, for the wind, he had heard, carried its scent on board the ships making up the neck of the Severn. Groom Grace had wanted him to try for Bristol and the colonies, and his mother and sister had worked on the Vicar to bring off a pardon, which was refused unconsidered; Matthew Grace was glad of it, for he had no wish now, having spent five years learning the trick of dying, to put off the performance of it.

By now, clouds had come between him and the bright light of the sun, subduing the whole valley to the unsubstantial colours of a dream, though a spire here and a copse there still gleamed and winked like jewels in the bright haze. And so, he thought, his life had been subdued, and he like a traveller who, coming in the evening to the end of a forest ride, sees his road behind him obscure and mysterious and hastens his steps. His mind lingered with a brief pleasure on those scattered moments that still wore

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the colour and livery of life. But now he could not see them distinct and separate: they merged into the ultimate moment when, turning, a man reprieved to death, to look once at the great west door, he saw it an instant swinging slowly open.

He slept that night in a loft over the Hall stables, and in the early morning was taken a day's journey from his village. Such brief formalities as were the due of Matthew Grace, stone-carver, being quickly finished, he was hanged just before noon on the eighth of May, seventeen hundred and two, in his twenty-ninth year.

GILBERT MURRAY

FROM THE SERENADE  
TO AMARYLLIS

(*Theocritus, Idyll III*)

HIPPOMENÈS, to win a maiden's grace,  
Took apples in both hands and ran apace;  
And Atalanta looked, and as she looked  
Maddened and leapt to Love's deep-whirling  
race.

For Pêro's sake, from Othrys to the sea  
Melampus drove the great white kine, and she  
In the broad arms of Bias found her rest,  
Mother most fair of wise Alphesibê.

And while his sheep along the mountain fed,  
Adonis, too, to more than madness led  
The beauteous Cytherea; him she holds  
And lets not from her bosom, even dead.

Oh, happy, happy, in his changeless fate  
Endymion sleeping! Happy, Love, and great  
Iasiôn, who found the mystic joy  
Which ye shall never learn, Unconsecrate!

P. G. WODEHOUSE

## DISENTANGLING OLD PERCY

DOESN'T some poet or philosopher of sorts say that it's just when our intentions are best that we always make the most poisonous floaters? I can't put my hand on the passage, but you'll find it in Shakespeare or somewhere, I'm pretty certain. Anyhow, it's always that way with me. And the affair of Percy Craye is a case in point.

I had been dining with Percy, a dear old pal of mine, one night at the Bank of England—he's in the Guards, and it was his turn to be on hand there and lay a stymie to any blighter or blighters who might try to slide in and rob the till—and as he was showing me out he said, "Reggie, old man,"—my name being that—"Reggie, old man, I'm rather worried."

"Are you, Percy, old pal?" I said. "I'm extremely sorry to hear that."

"Yes, Reggie," he said, "I am. It's like this. The Booles have asked me down to their place for the week-end, and I don't know whether to go or not. You see, they have the rottenest cook in the West of England, and besides that there's a frightful risk of music after dinner. On the other hand, young Roderick Boole thinks he can play billiards."

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“I should go.”

“But I’m not sure Roderick’s going to be there this time.”

It was a pretty tricky problem, and I didn’t wonder poor old Percy had looked pale and fagged at dinner.

Then I had the idea that really started all the trouble.

“I’ll tell you what,” I said. “Why don’t you consult a palmist?”

“Now, that’s a thought,” agreed Percy.

“There’s a great pal of mine named Mrs. Darrell who works the gaff in Bond Street under the name of ‘Dorothea.’ She’s the widow of a fellow I was at school with. Left her without a penny, don’t you know, and all that. Most pathetic. I’d like to put a job of work in her way. Besides, she’s a wonder. She’ll settle the whole thing for you in a second. She’ll see from the lines on your hand that you’re thinking of taking a journey, and she’ll either tell you to fizz ahead, which will mean that Roderick will be waiting for you, or else she’ll warn you to keep away because she sees disaster.”

“What do I do? Just walk in? Shan’t I feel a fearful chump? How much do I give her?”

“A guinea. You’d better write and make an appointment.”

“All right,” said Percy. “But I know I shall look a frightful fool.”

Well, in the end I took him round myself and left him there with his hands spread out on a velvet cushion: and about a week later I ran into him between the acts at the Palace.

He was beaming from ear to ear.

“Reggie,” he said, “you did me the best turn anyone’s ever done me, sending me to Dot Darrell. She’s a marvel. She had

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hardly looked at my hand when she said, ‘You will prosper in any venture you undertake.’ And next day, by Jove, I popped down to the Booles and separated young Roderick from four pounds seven and six. She’s a wonderful girl. Did you ever see just that shade of hair? Like leaves in autumn, what?”

Just then the bell rang, and I had to nip back to my stall.

I can’t fix the dates exactly, but it must have been about three weeks after this that I got a telegram, “Call Eaton Square immediately—Florence Craye.”

She needn’t have signed her name. I should have known who it was from the wording. Ever since I was a kid Percy’s sister Florence has oppressed me to the most frightful extent. Not that I’m the only one. Her brothers live in terror of her, I know. Especially Lord Weeting. He’s never been able to get away from her, and it’s absolutely broken his spirit. He’s a mild, hopeless sort of ass, who spends all his time at Weeting and has never been known to come to London. He’s writing a history of the family, or something, I believe.

You see, events have conspired, so to speak, to let Florence do pretty much as she likes in the home. The family affairs have got themselves into a bit of a muddle. Originally there was Percy’s father, Lord Worplesdon; Percy’s elder brother, Edwin, who’s Lord Weeting; Florence and Percy. Lady Worplesdon has been dead some years. Then came the smash. It happened through Lord Worplesdon. Most people if you ask them will tell you that he is bang off his rocker, and I’m not sure they’re not right. At any rate, one morning he came down to breakfast, lifted the first cover on the sideboard, said, in a despairing sort of way, “Eggs! Eggs! Eggs! Curse all eggs!” and walked out of the room.

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Nobody thought much of it till about an hour afterwards, when they found he had packed a portmanteau, left the house, and caught the train to London. Next day they got a letter from him, saying that he was off to the Continent, never to return, and that all communications were to be addressed to his solicitors.

And from that day none of them had seen him. He wrote occasionally, generally from Paris, and that was all.

Well, directly news of this got about, down swooped a series of aunts to grab the helm. They didn't stay long. Florence had them out, one after the other, in no time. If any lingering doubt remained in their minds as to who was going to be boss at Weeting, it wasn't her fault. And since then she has run the show.

Well, I went to Eaton Square. It was one of the aunt's houses. There was no sign of the aunt when I called—she had probably climbed a tree and pulled it up after her—but Florence was in the drawing-room.

She is a tall female with what, I believe, is called “a presence.” Her eyes are bright and black, and have a way of getting right inside you, don't you know, and running up and down your spine. She has a deep voice. She is about two years older than Percy's brother Edwin, who is six years older than Percy.

“Good afternoon,” she said. “Sit down.”

I poured myself into a chair.

“Reginald,” she said, “what is this I hear about Percy?”

“Percy?”

“He said that you introduced him.”

“Introduced him?”

“To this woman—this Mrs. Darrell.”

She pulled out a letter. Her eyes resumed their spine drill.

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“Who is she?”

“Only a palmist.”

“Only a palmist!” Her voice absolutely boomed. “Well, my brother Percy is engaged to be married to her!”

“Many happy returns of the day,” I said.

I don’t know why I said it. It wasn’t what I meant to say. I’m not sure I meant to say anything.

She glared at me. By this time I was pure jelly. I simply flowed about the chair.

“You are facetious, Reginald,” she said.

“No, no, no!” I shouted. “It slipped out. I wouldn’t be facetious for worlds.”

“I am glad. It is no laughing matter. Have you any suggestions?”

“Suggestions?”

“You don’t imagine it can be allowed to go on? The engagement must be broken, of course. But how?”

“Why don’t you tell him he mustn’t?”

“I shall naturally express my strong disapproval, but it may not be effective. When out of the reach of my personal influence my wretched brother is self-willed to a degree.”

I saw what she meant. Good old Percy wasn’t going to have those eyes patrolling his spine if he knew it. He meant to keep away and conduct this business on the correspondence system. There was going to be no personal interview with sister, if he had to dodge about London like a snipe. We sat for a long time without speaking. Then I became rather subtle. I had a brain wave and saw my way to making things right for Percy and at the same time squaring myself with Florence. After all, I

## DISENTANGLING OLD PERCY

thought, the old boy couldn't keep away from the ancestral hall for the rest of his life. He would have to go to Weeting sooner or later. And my scheme made it pleasant and easy for him.

"I'll tell you what I should do if I were you," I said. "I'm not sure I didn't read some book or see some play somewhere or other where they tried it on, and it worked all right. Chap got engaged to a girl and the family didn't like it, but, instead of cutting up rough they pretended they didn't object, and had the chap and the girl down to stay with them. And then, after the chap had seen the girl with the home-circle as a background, don't you know, he came to the conclusion that the shot wasn't on the board, and broke off the engagement."

It seemed to strike her.

"I hardly expected so sensible a suggestion from you, Reginald," she said. "It is a very good plan. It shows that you really have a definite substratum of intelligence; and it is all the more deplorable that you should idle your way through the world as you do, when you might be performing some really useful work."

That was Florence all over. Even when she patted you on the head she did it with her knuckles.

"I will invite them down next week," she went on. "You had better come too."

"It's awfully kind of you, but the fact is——"

"Next Wednesday. Take the three forty-seven."

I met Percy next day. He was looking happy, but puzzled, like a man who has found a sixpence in the street and is wondering if there's a string tied to it. I congratulated him on his engagement.

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"Reggie," he said, "a pretty rum thing has happened. I feel as if I'd trodden on the last step when it wasn't there. I've just had a letter from my sister Florence asking me to bring Dorothy to Weeting on Wednesday. Florence doesn't seem to mind the idea of the engagement a bit; and I'd expected that I'd have to put myself under police protection. I believe there's a catch somewhere."

I tapped him on the breast-bone.

"There is, Percy, old lovely," I said, "and I'll tell you what it is. I saw her yesterday and I can give you the inside information straight from the horse's mouth. She thinks that if you see the girl mingling with the home-circle you'll see flaws in her which you don't see when you don't see her mingling with the home-circle, don't you see? Do you see now?"

He laughed—heroically, as it were.

"I'm afraid she'll be disappointed. Love like mine is not dependent on environment."

Which wasn't bad, I thought, if it was his own.

I said good-bye to him and toddled along, rather pleased with myself. It seemed to me that I had handled his affairs in a pretty masterly manner.

Well, of course, the whole thing was an absolute frost, as I ought to have guessed it would be. Whatever could have induced me to think that a fellow like poor old Percy stood a dog's chance against a determined female like his sister Florence I can't imagine. It was like expecting an organ-grinder to put up a show with Mussolini. From the very start there was only one possible end to the thing. To a woman like Florence, who had trained herself as tough as whalebone by years of scrapping

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with her father and occasional by-battles with aunts it was as easy as killing rats with a stick.

I was sorry for Dot. She was really a good sort, and, as a matter of fact, just the kind of girl who would have done old Percy a bit of good. And on her own ground I shouldn't wonder if she might not have made a fight for it. But at Weeting, with the family portraits glaring at her from every wall, and a general atmosphere of chilly disapproval which would have taken the heart out of anyone who hadn't been brought up to it from childhood, she hadn't an earthly. Especially as poor old Percy was just like so much putty in Florence's hands when he couldn't get away from her. You could see the sawdust trickling out of Love's Young Dream in a steady flow.

I took her for a walk one afternoon, to see if I couldn't cheer her up a bit; but it wasn't much good. She hardly spoke a word till we were on our way home. Then she said, with a sort of jerk:

"I'm going back to London to-morrow, Reggie."

I suppose I ought to have pretended to be surprised, but I couldn't work it.

"I'm afraid you've had a rotten time," I said. "I'm awfully sorry."

She laughed.

"Thank you," she said. "It's nice of you to be sympathetic instead of tactful."

I hadn't any remarks to make. I whacked a nettle with my stick.

"I shall break off my engagement after dinner, so that Percy can have a good night's rest. I'm afraid he's been brooding on the future a good deal. It will be a great relief to him."

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"Oh, no," I said.

"Oh, yes. I know exactly how he feels. He thought he could carry me off, but he finds he over-estimated his powers. He has remembered that he is at Weeting. I imagine that the fact has been pointed out to him."

"If you ask my opinion," I said—I was feeling pretty sore about it—"that blighted blighter Florence is an absolute blighter."

"My dear Reggie, I wouldn't have dreamt of asking your opinion on such a delicate subject. But I'm glad to have it. Thank you very much. Do I strike you as a vindictive woman?"

"Not so very."

"Oh? Well, I'm feeling a little vindictive just at present."

She left next day. I gather she pushed Percy as per schedule, for the old boy looked distinctly brighter, and Florence wore an off-duty expression and was quite decently civil. Mrs. Darrell bore up all right. She avoided Percy, of course, and put in most of the time talking to Edwin. He evidently appreciated it, for I had never seen him look so happy before.

I popped back to London directly afterwards, and I hadn't been there much more than a week when a most remarkably rum thing happened. Turning in at the Alhambra for half an hour one evening, whom should I meet but brother Edwin, quite fairly festive with a fat cigar in his mouth.

"Halloa, Reggie!" he said. "What-ho, my lad!"

"What are you doing here?" I said.

"I had to come up to London to look up a Life of Hilary de

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Whyttange at the British Museum. The old bird is believed to be a sort of connection."

"This isn't the British Museum."

"I was beginning to suspect as much. The difference is subtle but well marked."

It struck me that there was another difference that was subtle but well marked, and that was the difference between the Edwin I'd left messing about over his family history a week before and the jovial buck who was blowing smoke in my face now.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "the British Museum would be all the better for a little of this sort of thing. It's too conservative. That's what's the trouble with the British Museum. What's the matter with having a couple of dancing-acts and a good comedian or two in the reading-room? It would brighten the place up and attract custom. Reggie, you're looking fatigued. There's a place at the end of that corridor expressly designed for supplying first-aid to the fatigued. Let me lead you to it."

I'm not given to thinking much as a rule, but I couldn't help pondering a bit over this meeting with Edwin. It's hard to make you see the remarkableness of the whole thing, for, of course, if you look at it in one way, there's nothing so frightfully racketty in smoking a cigar and drinking a whisky and soda. But then you have never seen Edwin. There are degrees in everything, don't you know? For Edwin to behave as he did with me that night was simply nothing more nor less than a frightful outburst, and it disturbed me. Not that I cared what Edwin did, as a rule, but I couldn't help feeling a sort of what-d'you-call-it?—a presentiment—that somehow, in some way I didn't understand,

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I was mixed up in it, or was soon going to be. I think the whole fearful family had got on my nerves to such an extent that the mere sight of any of them made me jumpy.

And, by Jove, I was perfectly right. In a day or two along came the usual telegram from Florence, telling me to come to Eaton Square.

I was getting about full up with Eaton Square, and I made up my mind I wouldn't go near the place. But, of course, when it came to the point, I simply hadn't the common manly courage to keep away.

Florence was there in the drawing-room as before.

"Reginald," she said, "I think I shall go raving mad."

This struck me as a jolly happy solution of everybody's troubles.

"Over a week ago," she went on, "my brother Edwin came up to London to consult a book in the British Museum. I anticipated this would occupy, perhaps, an afternoon, and was expecting him back by an early train the next day. He did not arrive. He sent an incoherent telegram. But even then I suspected nothing." She paused. "Yesterday morning," she said, "I had a letter from my Aunt Augusta."

She paused again.

"Very jolly," I said.

Her eyes tied a bow-knot in my spine.

"Jolly! Let me read you her letter. No; I will tell you its contents. Aunt Augusta had seen Edwin lunching at the Savoy with a creature."

"A what?"

"My aunt described her. Her hair was of a curious dull-bronze tint."

## DISENTANGLING OLD PERCY

"Your aunt's?"

"The woman's. It was then that I began to suspect. How many women with dull-bronze hair does Edwin know?"

"Great Scott! Why ask me?"

I had got used to being treated as a sort of "Hey, Bill!" by Florence, but I was hanged if I was going to be expected to be an encyclopaedia as well.

"One," she said. "That appalling Darrell woman."

She drew a deep breath.

"Yesterday evening," she said, "I saw them together in a taxi-meter cab. They were obviously on their way to some theatre."

She fixed me with her eye.

"Reginald," she said, "you must go and see her the first thing to-morrow."

"What!" I cried. "Me? Why? Why me?"

"Because you are responsible for the whole affair. You introduced Percy to her. You suggested that she should come to Weeting. Go to her to-morrow and ascertain her intentions."

"But——"

"The very first thing."

"But wouldn't it be better to collar Edwin and pump him?"

"I have made every endeavour to see Edwin, but he deliberately avoids me. His answers to my telegrams are wilfully evasive."

There was no doubt that Edwin had effected a thorough bolt. He was having quite the holiday. Two weeks in sunny London, what? And from what I'd seen of him, he seemed to be thriving on it. I didn't wonder Florence had got rather anxious. She'd

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have been more anxious if she had seen him when I did. He'd got a sort of "London is so bracing" look about him, which meant a whole lot of trouble before he trotted back to the fold.

Well, I started off to interview Mrs. Darrell, and, believe me, I didn't half like the prospect. I think they ought to train the District Messengers to do this sort of thing.

I found her alone. The rush-hour of clients hadn't begun.

"Hullo, Reggie!" she said. "How nice of you to call."

Very friendly and all that. Thus making the situation dashed difficult.

"I say, you know," I said. "What about it, don't you know?"

"I certainly don't," she said. "What ought I to know about what?"

"Well, about Edwin," I said. "How do we go?"

"Oh, so you're an ambassador?"

"Well, as a matter of fact I did come to see if I could find out how things were running. What's going to happen?"

"Are you consulting me professionally? If so, you must show me your hand. Or perhaps you would rather I showed you mine?"

It was rather subtle, but I got on to it after a bit.

"Yes," I said, "I wish you would."

"Very well. Do you remember a conversation we had my last afternoon at Weeting? We came to the conclusion that I was rather a vindictive woman."

"By Jove! You're stringing old Edwin along so as to score off Florence?"

"Why put it like that? How do you know I'm not very fond of Edwin?"

## DISENTANGLING OLD PERCY

"He's such a chump."

"But he's improving every day. Have you seen him? You must notice the difference?"

"There is a difference."

"He only wanted taking out of himself. I think he found his sister Florence's influence a little oppressive sometimes."

"No, but, I say," I said, "are you going to marry him?"

"A marriage may be indicated in Lord Weeting's hand, but I couldn't say without looking at it."

"But, look here, I shall have to tell Florence something definite, or she won't give me a moment's peace."

"Tell her Edwin is of age. Surely that's definite enough?"

And I couldn't get any more out of her. I went back to Florence and reported. She foamed at the mouth, more or less.

"Oh, if I were a man!" she said.

I didn't see how that would have helped. I said so.

"I'd go straight to Edwin and drag him away. He is staying at his club. If I were a man I would go in and find him——"

"Not if you weren't a member."

"And tell him what I thought of his conduct. As I'm only a woman, I have to wait in the hall while a deceitful small boy pretends to go and look for him."

It had never struck me before what a jolly sound institution a club was. Only a few days back I'd been thinking that the subscription to mine was a bit steep. But now I saw that the place earned every penny of the money.

"Have you no influence with him, Reginald?"

I said I didn't think I had. She called me something. Invertebrate, or something. I didn't catch it.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

"Then there's only one thing to do. You must find my father and tell him the whole story. Perhaps you may rouse him to a sense of what is right. You may make him remember that he has duties as a parent."

I thought it far more likely that I should make him remember that he had a foot. I hadn't a very vivid recollection of old Worplesdon, having been quite a kid at the time when he made his great speech on the egg question and legged it for the Continent; but what I did recollect didn't encourage me to go and chat with him about the duties of a parent. As I remembered him, he was a rather large man with elephantiasis of the temper. I distinctly recalled him on one occasion when I was spending my summer holidays at Weeting, and he found me trying to shave old Percy, then a kid of fourteen, with his razor.

"I shouldn't be able to find him," I began.

"You can get his address from his solicitors."

"He may be at the North Pole."

"Then you must go to the North Pole."

"But, I say——"

"Reginald!"

"Oh, all right."

I knew just what would happen. Parbury, Parbury, Parbury & Stevens the solicitors, simply looked at me as if I had been caught stealing milk-cans. At least, Stevens did. And the three Parburys would have done it, too, only they had been dead a good time. Finally, after drinking me in for about a quarter of an hour, Stevens said that if I desired to address a communication to his lordship, care of his office, it would be duly forwarded. "Good morning," "good morning." "Anything

## DISENTANGLING OLD PERCY

further?" "No, thanks." "Good morning," "good morning."

I handed the glad news on to Florence and left her to do what she liked about it. She went down and interviewed Stevens. I suppose he'd had experience of her. At any rate, he didn't argue. He yielded up the address in level time. Lord Worplesdon was in Paris, but was to arrive in London that night, and would doubtless be at his club.

It was the same club where Edwin was hiding from Florence. I pointed this out to her.

"There's no need for me to butt in, after all," I said. "He'll meet Edwin there, and they can fight it out in the smoking-room. You've only to drop him a line explaining the facts."

"I shall certainly communicate with him in writing, but nevertheless, you must see him. I cannot explain everything in a letter."

"But doesn't it strike you that he may think it pretty bad gall—impertinence, don't you know—for a comparative stranger like me to be tackling a delicate family affair like this?"

"You will explain that you are acting for me."

"It wouldn't be better if old Percy sallied along instead?"

"I wish you to go, Reginald."

Well, of course, it was all right, don't you know, but I was losing a stone a day over the business. I was getting so light that I felt that, when old Worplesdon kicked me, I should just soar up to the ceiling like an air-balloon.

The club was one of those large clubs that look like prisons. I used to go there to lunch with my uncle, the one who left me his money, and I always hated the place. It was one of those clubs that are all red leather and hushed whispers.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

I'm bound to say, though, there wasn't much hushed whispering when I started my interview with old Worplesdon. His voice was one of my childhood's recollections.

He was most extraordinarily like Florence. He had just the same eyes. I felt boneless from the start.

"Good morning," I said.

"What?" he said. "Speak up. Don't mumble."

I hadn't known he was deaf. The last time we'd had any conversation—on the subject of razors—he had done all the talking. This seemed to me to put the lid on it.

"I only said 'Good morning,'" I shouted.

"Good what? Speak up. I believe you're sucking sweets. Oh, good morning? I remember you now. You're the boy who spoiled my razor."

I didn't half like this reopening of old wounds. I hurried on.

"I came about Edwin, Lord Worplesdon," I said.

"Who?"

"Edwin. Your son."

"What about him?"

"Florence told me to see you."

"Who?"

"Florence, your daughter."

"What about her?"

All this comedy duo business, mind you, as if we were bellowing to each other across the street. All round the room you could see the old gentlemen shooting out of their chairs like rockets and dashing off at a gallop to write to the committee about it. Thousands of waiters had appeared from nowhere, and were hanging about dusting table-legs. If ever a business wanted to

## DISENTANGLING OLD PERCY

be discussed privately, this seemed to me to be it. And it was about as private as a conversation through megaphones in Piccadilly Circus.

“Didn’t she write to you?”

“I got a letter from her. I tore it up. I didn’t read it.”

Jolly, what? I began to understand what a shipwrecked bird must feel when he finds there’s something gone wrong with the life-belt.

I thought I might as well get to the point and get it over.

“Edwin’s going to marry a palmist,” I said.

“Who the devil’s Harry?”

“Not Harry. Marry. He’s going to marry a palmist.”

About four hundred waiters noticed a speck of dust on an ash-tray at the table next to ours, and swooped down on it.

“Edwin is going to marry a palmist?”

“Yes.”

“She must be mad. Hasn’t she seen Edwin?”

And just then who should stroll in but Edwin himself. I sighted him and gave him a hail.

He curvetted up to us. It was amazing the way the fellow had altered. He looked like a two-year-old. Flower in his button-hole, and a six-inch grin, and all that. Old Worplesdon seemed surprised, too. I didn’t wonder. The Edwin he remembered was a pretty different kind of chap.

“Halloo, Dad!” he said. “Fancy meeting you here! Have a cigarette!”

He shoved out his case. Old Worplesdon helped himself in a sort of dazed way.

“You *are* Edwin?” he said slowly.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

I began to sidle out. They didn't notice me. They had moved to a settee, and Edwin seemed to be telling his father a funny story. At least, he was talking and grinning, and old Worplesdon was making a noise like distant thunder, which I suppose was his way of chuckling. I slid out and left them.

Some days later Percy called on me. He was looking scared.

"Reggie," he said, "what do doctors call it when you think you see things when you don't? Hal—something. I've got it, whatever it is. It's sometimes caused by overwork. But it can't be that with me, because I've not been doing any work. You don't think my brain's going or any bally rot like that, do you?"

"What do you mean? What's been happening?"

"It's like being haunted. Four times in the last three days I could have sworn I saw my father and Edwin. I saw them as plainly as I see you. And, of course, Edwin's at Weeting and Father's on the Continent somewhere. Do you think it's some sort of warning? Do you think I'm going to die?"

"It's all right, old man," I said. "As a matter of fact, they are both in London just now."

"You don't mean that? Great Scott, what a relief! But Reggie, old top, it couldn't have been them really. The last time was at the Silver Chicken on a gala night, and the chap I mistook for Edwin was wearing a false nose and dancing all by himself in the middle of the floor."

I admitted it was pretty queer.

I was away for a few days after that in the country. When I got back I found a pile of telegrams waiting for me. They were all from Florence, and they all wanted me to go to Eaton Square. The last of the batch, which had arrived that morning, was so

## DISENTANGLING OLD PERCY

jolly peremptory, that I felt as if something had bitten me when I read it.

For a moment, I admit I hung back. Then I rallied. There are times in a man's life when he has got to show a bit of the old bulldog British pluck, don't you know, if he wants to preserve his self-respect. I did then. And in about two ticks I was bowling off to Charing Cross and left for France by the night boat.

About three weeks later I fetched up at Nice. You can't walk far at Nice without bumping into a casino. The one I hit my first evening was the Casino Municipale, in the Place Masséna. It looked more or less of a home from home, so I strolled in. There was quite a crowd round the boule-tables, and I squashed in. And when I worked through into the front rank I happened to look down the table and there was Edwin, with a green Tyrolese hat hanging over one ear, clutching out for a lot of five-franc pieces which the croupier was steering towards him at the end of a rake.

I was feeling lonely, for I knew no one in the place, so I edged round in his direction.

Half-way there I heard my name called, and there was Dot Darrell.

I saw the whole thing in a flash. Old Worplesdon hadn't done a thing to prevent it, and the marriage had taken place. And here they were on their honeymoon. I wondered what Florence was thinking of it.

"Well, well, here we all are," I said. "I've just seen Edwin. He seems to be winning."

"Dear boy!" she said. "He does enjoy it so. I think he gets so much more out of life than he used to, don't you?"

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

“Rather! May I wish you happiness?”

“Thank you so much, Reggie. I sent you a piece of cake, but I suppose you never got it.”

“Old Worplesdon didn’t make any objection, then?”

“On the contrary. He was more in favour of the marriage than anyone.”

“And I’ll tell you why,” I said. “I’m rather a chump, you know, but I observe things. I bet he was grateful to you for taking Edwin in hand and making him human.”

“Why, you’re wonderful, Reggie. That’s exactly what he said himself. It was that that first made us friends.”

“And—er—Florence?”

She sighed.

“I’m afraid Florence has taken the thing a little badly. But I hope to win her over in time. I want all my children to love me.”

“All your what?”

“I think of them as my children, you see. I adopted them as my own when I married their father. Did you think I had married Edwin? What a funny mistake! I am very fond of Edwin; but not in that way. No; I married Lord Worplesdon. We left him at our villa to-night, as he had some letters to get off. You must come and see us, Reggie. I always feel that it was you brought us together, you know. I wonder if you will be seeing Florence when you get back? Will you give her my very best love?”

# JOHN DRINKWATER

## UNCLE WAT

### I

UNCLE WAT! Uncle Wat!"  
"Who's that a-calling?"  
"Calling to see you, Uncle Wat."  
"Somebody calling?

Oh, it's you, Mister McVitty. Good morning, good morning,  
A friend of yours, Mister McVitty? That's very good.

Good morning.

Come up and see your lady, and your friend's lady? Yes,—  
Mister McVitty, what you say goes I guess.

How soon? This afternoon?

Very well, Mister McVitty, I'll be there, sir, yes.'

### II

Till dusk came falling  
Uncle Wat sat calling  
Ghosts and ghosts and ghosts,  
Dim Virginian ghosts.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

Uncle Wat said he was ninety, or maybe  
More than a hundred, a hundred and three,  
And it wasn't easy yet to remember he was free.  
He was old, he said, very very old,  
A very old nigger, and remembered being sold  
For twelve hundred dollars when he was young and strong;  
And some of the masters were good that he'd had,  
And some damn bad,  
And beat a slave for doing right or doing wrong.

### III

Uncle Wat came dressed  
In his best,  
With a silk top-hat,  
And a black frock-coat,  
And a red cravat  
Pinned at his throat  
With a skunk-tooth pin,  
And a wide body-belt  
Of bright green felt  
Studded with beads and clippings of tin  
And an ink-pot lid stuck round about  
With tags of wool and a chain of dimes,  
And a picture of Gaby Deslys cut out  
From the *New York Sunday Times*.



Eric Kennington  
cheek bone red.  
hair grey  
blue brown hair.  
eye blue grey dark.  
grey darker  
hair dark.



## UNCLE WAT

### IV

He told us how the word was sent  
In eighteen-sixty-three  
To say the Yankee President  
Had set the niggers free.

And once upon election day  
He'd been a nigger bold.  
“Each nigger's free to vote the way  
He will,” they had been told,

“But any voting Yankee stuff  
Can find his keep elsewhere.”  
And that was argument enough  
To keep the ballot square.

But Uncle Wat he answered flat  
“I'm Mister Lincoln's man,  
So, thank you Mister Democrat,  
I vote Republican.”

And vote he did; and got thereby  
Much lore of will and must,  
With half a coat for company,  
And less than half a crust.

## V

He remembered this of Lincoln. What befell  
Him after, but sudden death, he couldn't tell.  
Some said that he was famous. Frosty-haired,  
Black African, whose father had been laired  
By trading devils on the Barbary coast,  
Old Uncle Wat, enchanting ghost by ghost  
Out of his dim plantations, had been one  
In a great story, and, the story done,  
Through sixty years of uneventful toil  
Had drawn his wages from Virginian soil;  
And now the epic still was living bright,  
The sixty years an unremembered night.  
He had seen Armageddon and The Flood,  
The Forty Days, the Sacrament of Blood,  
He had known whips and manacles, had heard,  
Stranger than speech on Sinai, the word  
That gave to him his body for his own.  
And there were scorns and incantations known  
When Lee disputed the Potomac side,  
When Lincoln lived, and Stonewall Jackson died.  
And since? What matter since? He'd earned his bread;  
A coffin paid for, underneath his bed,  
Was ready, and, what time the Lord should say,  
He'd bid them close the door, shut out the day,  
Leave him alone, his face turned to the wall,  
With the Lord calling, and no other call.

## UNCLE WAT

### VI

“Good day, Uncle Wat. Thank you for calling.”  
“Good day, Mister McVitty; I like to be calling.  
Good day, ma’am. Good day, ma’am.  
I’m going to the bosom of Abraham.  
I’m going to the fold of the Good Shepherd’s flocks.”  
And he pulled a pair of thick black socks  
Over his boots, and muffled his throat,  
And slowly buttoned his black frock-coat,  
And stooping over his stick he passed  
**On his last Virginian Voyage at last.**

EDMUND BLUNDEN

A POSTSCRIPT

THE summer of 1918 drifted past with its eddies of intrigue and dispute and rumour in the camp and the world beyond. It was a camp among ancestral trees, copses, meadows, cornfields bubbling with poppies, windmills on their little heights of goat-grazed turf; besides, the sky was blue and the air southern; yet I screen my eyes from that summer. The delight of being away from France after almost two years of ruins and ever-spreading terror was not itself wholly good; youth, now certain of a short time to live, through some magic dispensation of the War Office, did strange things in a world which it had never had the time to study. Moved by some instinct of spiritual pride, I no sooner arrived in the camp for my six months' respite than I wrote—I “had the honour to submit”—my application to be allowed to return to France, where such unpleasant German manœuvres were proceeding. The application received no answer, except amused comment from an old major before dinner. I waited a week, then repeated my appeal with more eloquence. This time the Doctor was ordered to examine me; he said that I was unfit to return overseas. It was kind, and before many weeks in the camp it became true. But I was not finished yet. I had the blank half of the warrant which carried me from France, only can-

## A POSTSCRIPT

celled in copying pencil. I considered the necessary innocent forgery, which offered no apparent difficulty. The only trouble would be in getting my valise (with books) to the station, eight miles off. However, I already knew a man with a pony-trap. It was merely a question of choosing the night for shooting the moon.

Then one morning I was ordered to assist at a court of inquiry in a town. This had the side-result of a romance, so immediate and complete as to seem love at first sight; my midnight stratagem and my warm fancy of surprising my old battalion in some trench or farm buildings behind Kemmel were set aside. Now began the real grimness of that shining summer in England. First of all, it was a bad camp. Next, there was almost always a stealthy hatred between those who had never "been out," or had taken one joy ride behind the battlefield and an overseas-service chevron, and the returned B. E. F. man, who was presumed to be no "soldier." Then again, the place was merely a mill for the purpose of crushing the soul out of eighteen-year-old boys and sending them wholesale into the world's fiercest furnaces. And there were personal sources of misery. Over-worked, insulted and ill, some of us broke out into tirades against our oppressors, and for a time paid heavily for our uncontrol. It might be amusing now to recall some of these moments; but not altogether; enough to note how one of them became tragic. A sergeant-major—a fighting man—was "broken" on some ground or other which seemed unimportant. On church parade he talked to me of the case, but did not mention his plan; the next I heard was that he had committed suicide, leaving letters to say that he hoped his action might be for the good

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

of his survivors in the camp. A mutiny followed. After the restoration of "law and order," I one day took a draft of two hundred "eighteen-year-olds" to the troop train, and was going round the sections, wishing I was going farther with them, when the colonel appeared. It was embarrassing. There were groans and booings all along the train.

But I delay. When my orders for France at last arrived, I was in bed, struggling with asthma. The attempt to obey the orders landed me in hospital, under considerable distress; and, when I emerged, I was sent on to another camp, still ill. Days of pale, damp autumn brought November 11th, and the hooting of sirens in the harbour below the parade ground on which we were engaged as usual. Nobody had expected an armistice, and nobody was excited by it. All assembled round the orderly room, wishing that the colonel would celebrate the event with a speech; but he avoided the historic opportunity. Two or three days later I was ordered to France, and this time I had no trouble in arriving there except the task of shepherding several hundred scarcely happy men of all regiments into their base camp.

Such journeys were too monotonous to be remembered. The usual scramble to the engine for hot water, and the usual rapid hunt for coke and wood round any cabins beside the line, took place at the halts. I looked out for Tincques, which had curiously remained in my memory from the time when we were passing on our way to the old Somme battle. We detrained at Douai, and I immediately felt the once-imagined, singular excitement moving freely where the German soldier had been billeted. It was too late; but what would not one have given in 1916 to be

## A POSTSCRIPT

an invisible man for a day or two and see how brother Boche was enjoying life! The city was not entirely without suggestion of its dignified history, but the dirtiness of retreat had yet to be cleansed. It had been on the edge of destruction, and was now merely a clearing-house for troops and traffic. The smell of old blankets, wet boots, and wood-smoke came from the dark holes of the barracks in the November twilight. Leaving the men there with whom I was joining a battalion still farther on towards Germany, I took my doubtful way along the canal, examining shell-holes and the litter of machine-gun posts that once—not many hours ago—made that canal devilish. I saw an empty building strewn with papers; taking one, I read a German advertisement for condensed milk. But the packing-cases all round were torn open and contained no sample. Douai was like that. By a conservatory door I found what looked like a book of essays in good binding. But there was no text. The whole place was the book of life without the inside.

Marching on from this husk of masonry next day, we crossed a plain of coaldust tracks and grey grass, of church spires and chimneys; this trampled country continued for miles, but presently the villages and lands wore a better freshness. Here and there a lonely house on a causeway had been unlucky in the final fighting. One such exposed its deadness at the approach to Hornaing, where I joined my new battalion. The process is always a little unnerving, and to me, with the sense that I ought to have been in France all 1918, it was more than so. However, there were the landmarks plain enough: battalion headquarters and mess, company headquarters, the canteen, the regimental sergeant-major, and one's billet. The white and red houses

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

were all much alike; from some of them emerged girls much older than their years, and old men who lived without apparent nourishment. Some of the women of the place were not very well pleased with the peace; generally, yes, but personally, no. I guessed at the circumstances of these strained apprehensive faces. Leaving company headquarters in the first evenings, I could feel much the same difficulty in the abrupt change from a long war to silence. I scanned the eastern darkness as though, if I looked hard enough, the familiar line of lights would be playing there. The darkness was in some way worse than those assistants of vengeance. Youth had been subdued to what it worked in.

The old officers of the battalion, who had seen it through, proved to be restless and irritable. They saw disintegration advancing. The men, seeing no special necessity for kicking their heels in a nondescript French village without my "line of lights," went about their routine without enthusiasm. Drill, marching, inspections, games, concert parties and educational intentions filled in the time. The best diversion was salvaging in woods and marshes and windy beetfields, but we found little; and my one pair of boots was not equal to these occasions. I was never in a worse billet: the floor was of mud and the enormous mattress was damp beyond help. Rations and supplies altogether became meagre. They had to be brought by rail across the desolation between Arras and ourselves; and now discipline all over Europe was falling to dust, the old battlefield was haunted by looters, military and civilian. Still, the men clubbed together to get what vegetables the village could sell as a supplement to their meals; and the young women whose estaminet one knew

## A POSTSCRIPT

would refer with pity to the far worse condition of even the German officers' table a few weeks earlier. "Soup—our dog refused it." There was a hope for the future if one considered this kind of remark, and the tenderness in it; but I was glad I was not one of those girls.

In an atmosphere, then, of discontent and indirection, we waited for 1919. Sometimes there was a lively evening, but it depended on make-believe rather than reality. Christmas duly produced a special celebration. It happened, however, that nothing to the purpose could be bought in our district, and with an officer named Browning (not unlike the poet in appearance) and two quartermaster-sergeants, I was sent off in good time to buy the Christmas dinner at Arras. When nowadays I think of buying my own dinner, I am surprised that "out of all this great big world they'd chosen me" to strike a bargain with a Frenchwoman for a pig, cases of wine, hogsheads of beer, and other provisions. But so it was, and I was happy, for the train to Arras, swinging round Douai's red and grey mass across moist green and glittering water-lights, entered the former fields of battle in daylight. "Water, water everywhere," or rather ooze and slush, was working along old cuttings and trenches and holes of the yellow waste. The railway carried over such a swamp was a miracle. It was only just a railway. One could guess at the dead still lying about beyond the banks, even if the choked dugouts beside the rails were not full of them. Brown mounds of bricks with claws of machinery projecting, and a few huts with their round iron roofs, were all that rose from the famous plain. Roeux Chemical Works might have been any of these low heaps of waste. As we approached Arras, however, the valley of the

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Scarpe retained a pleasant ghost or two of the leafy past, and lines of slender tree-shapes marked that last pathetic area of No-Man's Land and British stand-to billets during the years of steady trenches.

Finding my way into a draughty house in Arras, used as a club, I signed the book—and above my signature I saw “G. H. Harrison.” It was almost two years since I had seen my true Colonel. I looked again: he had been here the day before. But perhaps he was staying? It was in vain; he had gone. I waited about, pretending to read, in case he should be coming back; but he did not, and a great and sudden hope went to the ground. Reduced afresh to the drifting mood of those days, I prowled in Arras and saw the landmarks, the still towering Hôtel de Ville and the square with its grey house-fronts (“Spanish Square”), its enlarged cellars still looking like man’s real home, its barbed-wire barricades. On the whole the German gunners had treated Arras kindly; but at its eastern bounds the nakedness of the land began instantly. At present it was still a “downstairs” town. The vast rooms aloft would not be easy to return to. I found a shop open, chiefly selling soap and sardines, in the ground floor of a fine house, with a flag over the street; but overhead was vacancy and wreck.

Next day in a cold drizzle we walked out to a village called Dainville, and inquiring at an estaminet controlled by two sisters who had not seen four years of the British soldier for nothing, found that our Christmas dinner could be supplied. It would cost more than usual—but we had to have it. One more night in Arras, with old trench-maps and the *Life of Keats* for company—then back to Dainville, and concluding the deal.

## A POSTSCRIPT

Foully cold as I was, I rejoiced in all this; there stood a fine farm with stone outhouses—should have been our billet; there, among half-lowered walls, a good corner for C Company cookers; there, a pretty turning, the very thing for marching in by after a day in the practice trenches. Everything almost was fair or ugly, good or bad, according to its association with the spirit of the B. E. F. But not everything: there was the citadel on our way into Arras—as at Ypres there had been some traces of hornwork and escarpment—to work upon the feelings with the mysterious antiquity of British expeditions to these simple places.

The slate-tinted reflection of watery paving and creeping ditches dies away into a cold darkness with a wind from the east, from those places which I never knew and which I now conjecture to be more savage and hopeless than any I did know—Gavrelle and Wancourt and Roeux. I am in a mental blind alley. This is Arras, full of the domestic echoes of our army, our armies; I was ever an antiquary, and searched the hummocks of Ypres like an Orientalist in Xanadu; I should be going about Arras and reading every syllable of her ancient and modern drama, the comic reliefs and the tragic impacts alike. But again, I am out of tune. It needs the old faces, voices, songs, jests, Colonel Harrison, the sequence and limitation of trench warfare. Meanwhile, the metal of the gaping roof of Arras Station is the wind's dreary harmonium, clanking and twanging; the swell of the wind comes flooding through the cold platforms with a mockery of the past or the future habits of railways. From these feelings the arrival of the “Christmas dinner” on a peasant's cart arouses me; we set about discovering whether

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

there ever will be a train, other than the wind's creation, passing east through Arras, and, if there will, how to put our grimy cargo aboard from its place in the mud.

Midnight, more false rumours through the station, and at last an enormous train; we run our barrels and shoulder our boxes into the already overcrowded trucks of snoring or restless soldiers, tripping over heaps of equipment, and breathing the vapour of mud, sweat, greased leather, trodden food-scrap, and dirty water. It is a troop-train rather resembling that of some Balkan war than the not altogether unkempt horse-trucks of our old times in Flanders. A sapper who resented our forcing our goods into the gangway swears at and about us, with a dark mouth and insane eye. We hope to be carried in this large coffin to the station nearest our battalion, but are not. A longer stop than usual brings us out on the track, questioning, receiving no replies; then at last a Frenchman tells us the train goes no farther. We watch him depart with his lantern; we believe he is right, and we unload our belongings. Later, we discover with no mean cunning that some trucks in an archway will go where we wish; the cold and slimy business of getting the "Christmas dinner" along and forcing it all into the truck high above the track is repeated. The wind is still in the east. The clay-coloured daylight comes.

We arrive! I direct my companions to hurry up the four or five miles of cobbles to the battalion, and send transport; meanwhile I volunteer to watch the stacked cases and casks, which I have paid for on the battalion's account. Black-handed, black-jowled, black-streaked from head to foot, I wait; and an officer of military police comes for me swinging a heavy revolver in his

## A POSTSCRIPT

hand. "Your papers." The revolver is not swinging now. I put my blue fingers into my inner pocket, and hand him all I have—letters, officer's blue record-book, and what the hell's the matter with you? He with an anxious eye runs over the miscellany; hands part back; saunters with a careful ease into the station, returns and restores my blue book. "All right. But I was looking out for an Australian. Your stuff, I suppose? Ah, the battalion's Christmas dinner." He retires into his office out of the wind; and I wait. No transport arrives. I am being prepared for influenza, but at last I decide against the process, and I give a call at the guard-room, where a sentry stands over some of His Majesty's property. A present, and a promise, seem to assure me, according to old traditions of this war, that my cases and casks will be looked after by the sentries until I can see why the transport is not on the way; and I depart in relief, with aching eyes and shapeless feet. Unhappily for me, "this war" ended in November. The transport, some hours later, receives our Christmas luxuries from the guard, but not all—the *blanc* is heavily lightened. I do not gain in reputation on this adventure; I take some days to recover my normal ill-health; and I am twenty pounds out of pocket.

Christmas, nevertheless, arrived and was celebrated; after this the chief purpose of our loitering in France appeared to be celebrating. The old German mess, with its curved and pointed ceilings, was a scene of many endeavours to rebel against the lethargy of armistice. Order went to the ropes more than once; there was a snowy disgraceful midnight when a venerable feud ended in a raid on the adjutant's billet. In his pyjamas this once Wolseyan youth was hauled into the road and soused in

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

the icy slush. Why, only the instigator knew; but sympathetic assistants were not lacking after repeated draughts of apothecary's wine. Some afternoons we went off by any lorry that passed to Valenciennes or Denain; these excursions showed us little but successions of mine-craters at cross-roads, wood bridges outflanking the ruins of old and solid ones, and then greasy defaced streets with the wonderful German system of direction-boards conspicuous on houses and corners, and shop-windows coldly crying famine, and mad prices for soap and butter and bread. Duty discovered some varieties for us. Working through the marshy plantations towards St. Amand, if we found little but an occasional belt of machine-gun cartridges or a revolver holster (one carried these trophies in with astonishment at the trouble, remembering the prodigious quantity of oddments wasted in and below the Somme battle-field)—wood-ranging here, I say, we had the relics of country beauty about us, and woolly-headed rushes whitened against the blue sky. An airplane plunged into a swamp; out we went with ropes and shovels, like the Lilliputians after Gulliver, and pushed and hauled and squashed and bawled. At night in my damp stable I read Elia and Verlaine, and sometimes my old host, a miner, would look in: “Monsieur, je viens demander . . . une voiture pour aller aux mines . . . y a du charbon là-bas. . . .” “C'est que ma fille est malade . . . sans doute vous autres officiers trouvent des fruits sur la table, des oranges—elle désire spécialement des oranges.” His son had managed to retain a lean yellow-rimmed bicycle, and went off on it frequently in the direction of the mines, but not for coal. Presently, after a donation of oranges, Mademoiselle recovered, and, when I

## A POSTSCRIPT

changed my billet in order to obtain a dry room for myself and my Charles Lamb, she came to see the lady of the house, and called on me with that pale face and grey-eyed mysteriousness—she warned me with strange emphasis against one or two of the girls of the parish. It is a queer world, this world of concealed meanings and magnetic accidents of human desire; how many are the voices that whisper, and could only be answered with years and years of event!

I do not know how my young indolent friend succeeded in keeping his spidery bicycle intact along the terrible roads by the slag-heaps, with the smoke creeping from them. The cobblestones had been bulged by iron wheels into endless ups and downs, slippery with bad weather. Ordered one day to make a reconnaissance in and about the little town of Bouchain, I rode the usual ironclad army bicycle with difficulty along the stumbling-blocks, and it happened that columns of lorries were passing us, sweeping the width almost of the way. We went ahead. Yet none of us was offered music-hall engagements. Bouchain was still Marlborough's town, or the Prince Eugène's. Its waterways defended it on the ancient principle. It slept. And yet it contained large modern barracks and horse-lines; its mill had been turned into a strong tower, where we climbed among the littered explosives, ever curious in our boredom. Along the river was a place where the carcasses of animals had been collected for the service of the German army; many of these carcasses were still falling to pieces and mouldering down the banks into the poisoned stream. Vast and brilliant organization had dug out hidden acres of ammunition dumps in this area, and supplied underground trolleys on their rails, and sys-

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

tems of electricity; these were dead, but the town of Bouchain only slept, and budded trees around the dilapidated houses awaited the spring.

Then came the chance for us. To Germany! and in a couple of days. I went to secure my rights of action once more. Then came a letter from home, with bad news, and urgently recalling me; and almost at once a call to the orderly-room followed. Some time before, our qualifications for being demobilized had been noted down, and I as a "student" had the chance of being emancipated early. The major gave me the order for my departure. I thought of Germany, but the dark message I had had overwhelmed that speculation. I thanked him, and made up my mind. In any event, the period of dreary futility seemed about to end. No more of those "lessons" from the French interpreter to fill in the evenings; no more blank stares over flat and watery plains. The question now was, what sort of train converted, or began to convert, the soldier into the civilian? Fancy was abroad, and she painted a luxury of travel—talked of cushioned and warmed compartments and a train-ferry to Richborough (it sounded like Richebourg to some ears). The actual journey was so great an ordeal that I wondered if we should see England. Winter returned with fangs; the cattle-truck was without even a brazier, and the wood-fire which I helped to keep going threatened to suffocate us or to light the whole truck into a moving pyre. Two of the inmates lay under a blanket, ill. They had the new influenza. They died soon after they were "detrained" on the long bleak siding at the base. I had seen war's ironies when we were in a manner equal to them, but these supplementary strokes were surely out of all bounds. Looking

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back over 1918 and this opening quarter of 1919, I became desperately confused over war and peace. Clearly, no man who knew and felt could wish for a second that the war should have lasted a second longer. But, where it was not, and where the traditions and government which it had called into being had ceased to be, we who had been brought up to it were lost men. Strangers surrounded me. No tried values existed now. I looked through the gashed linen window of the hut in the waiting-camp at the way down to the boat, deep in snow; I saw the unmanned cook-houses and “ablution sheds”; and the sunnier hours of my old companionship at Béthune, and even in the valley of the Ancre, with their attendant loyalties and acceptances, seemed like sweet reason and lost love. Marching down to the docks, at the side of a great column of weary soldiers of all sorts, I was suddenly pulled up by an officer of about my own age, who, in a trembling voice, demanded that I should at once improve the march discipline of the multitude, none of whom I had ever seen before. The Base Commandant, he warned me, would be on the look-out as we passed his headquarters. He had particularly given orders that the marching of the troops should be maintained at the highest standard. “Keep in your fours!”, “pick up the step there!”—but I did not succeed in reviving the martial spirit in those pestered, loaded, scrambling ranks with my thin reminders of a fantastic chivalry.

G. K. CHESTERTON

TO ST. MICHAEL, IN TIME  
OF PEACE

**M**ICHAEL, Michael: Michael of the Morning,  
Michael of the Army of the Lord,  
Stiffen thou the hand upon the still sword,  
Michael,  
Folded and shut upon the sheathed sword, Michael,  
Under the fullness of the white robes falling,  
Gird us with the secret of the sword.

When the world cracked because of a sneer in heaven,  
Leaving out of all time a scar upon the sky,  
Thou didst rise up against the Horror in the highest,  
Dragging down the highest that looked down on the Most High:  
Rending from the seventh heaven the hell of exaltation  
Down the seven heavens till the dark seas burn:  
Thou that in thunder threwest down the Dragon  
Knowest in what silence the Serpent can return.

Down through the universe the vast night falling,  
(Michael, Michael: Michael of the Morning!)  
Far down the universe the deep calms calling,  
(Michael, Michael: Michael of the Sword!)

## TO ST. MICHAEL, IN TIME OF PEACE

Bid us not forget in the baths of all forgetfulness,  
In the sigh long drawn from the frenzy and the fretfulness,  
In the huge holy sempiternal silence,  
In the beginning was the Word.

When from the deeps a dying God astounded  
Angels and devils who do all but die,  
Seeing Him fallen where thou couldst not follow,  
Seeing Him mounted where thou couldst not fly,  
Hand on the hilt, thou hast halted all thy legions,  
Waiting the Tetelestai and the acclaim,  
Swords that salute Him dead and everlasting  
God beyond God and greater than His Name.

Round us and over us the cold thoughts creeping,  
(Michael, Michael: Michael of the battle-cry!)  
Round us and under us the thronged worlds sleeping,  
(Michael, Michael: Michael of the Charge!)  
Guard us the Word; the trysting and the trusting  
Edge upon honour and the blade unrusting,  
Fine as the hair and tauter than the harpstring,  
Ready as when it rang upon the targe.

He that giveth peace unto us; not as the world giveth:  
He that giveth law unto us; not as the scribes:  
Shall He be softened for the softening of the cities  
Patient in usury; delicate in bribes?

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

They that come to quiet us, saying the sword is broken,  
Break men with famine, fetter them with gold,  
Sell them as sheep; and He shall know the selling,  
For He was more than murdered. He was sold.

Michael, Michael: Michael of the Mastering,  
Michael of the marching on the mountains of the Lord,  
Marshal the world and purge of rot and riot,  
Rule through the world till all the world be quiet:  
Only establish when the World is broken,  
What is unbroken is the Word.

# HILAIRE BELLOC

## ON PROPHETS

**G**OING through the battlefield of the Somme I mused on Prophecy: for the War was full of them, being a time of tense nerves. I discovered two kinds of prophecies: the prophecy of judgement and the prophecy of inspiration. The prophecy of judgement is heard when a man, having calculated the strength of present forces which he knows, and having regarded their nature, says: "They will produce this or that." The prophecy of inspiration is heard when a man says without apparent grounds known to himself or others: "This will come to pass." And when that future happening seems incredible the prophecy has its full power—should it be fulfilled. Thus it was a prophecy of inspiration which made that monk write down, centuries ago, of the Hohenzollerns, that William (he of Sedan) would raise the house to its highest glory, that his son (Frederick) would have a brief unhappy reign, that *his* son (our late enemy, William) would be the last. But this prophecy was of things credible enough. One of more power was that of Joan of Arc: that her action would last "a year, and a little more"; that she would "crown the king in Rheims." That prophecy was made by a poor girl in an obscure hamlet, hundreds of miles away from her exiled uncrowned king: a peasant girl—or child—of

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

sixteen. It was made when the whole strength of this world made it wildly impossible. It was made in January, 1429. She did crown the king in Rheims, and she did "last" the year and a little over. She marched first against Orleans on April 24th, 1429. She was captured at Compiègne on May 24th, 1430.

It was a prophecy of judgment when Catherine of Russia said, in the midst of the French Revolution: "Believe me, Cæsar will come!" And it was a prophecy of judgment when that friend bade Gibbon, who was about to write his *History of the Decline and Fall* in French, to write it in English: because, he said, our "Plantations in America" must grow to such a size that they will furnish a wider reading public than any other.

The prophecies that succeed enhance a man's reputation more than anything else can do: much more than virtue and more even (for the moment) than genius in verse. When I myself said that the first action of a European war would be an attack on the forts of Liège (I said it in 1911), the fulfilment raised my reputation not a little; but that was because my English audience did not know that thousands of men who had studied the question had taken that same thing for granted since many years. During the War I was careful to make no prophecies: for there was an orgy of prophesying going on, and it was a warning: there was Mr. Wells telling us that the French would be over the Rhine in a few weeks, and Alfred Harmsworth telling us of the "Russian steam-roller," and all the rest of it. But I did venture on one prophecy—not of inspiration, but of judgment—I made it when Bulgaria joined the Grand Alliance of Central Europe. I said she would be the first to break away—and she

## ON PROPHETS

was. But I got no glory, I am glad to say, for by that time everyone had forgotten the time of her entry. Had I got glory by it I might have been tempted to prophesy again: and that, like repeating a card-trick, is fatal.

One of the worst prophecies of the War was made by a Labour member of large weight and years, called, I think, "Uncle," by his playful colleagues. He went to this same battlefield of the Somme and prophesied that, after the War, it would be out of cultivation for a hundred years. He was wrong. It was under cultivation in three. And a Treasury official told me that the moment the French stabilized their currency their unemployment would rise to fantastic heights. And Repington told us that all the world would shortly be speaking English; and one of the politicians went about saying wisely in '19 that England and Germany would be in close alliance within ten years, and another used to bleat at his own dinner-table in London all during the fighting: "We *can't* win: let's make peace."

But really, when it comes to prophecies that fail, one could fill a book, and I've written enough already.

HUMBERT WOLFE  
VENI CREATOR!

C REATOR of the spirit, self-created,  
since all creation is only thought ungodded  
by gradual matter, slowly separated  
from beauty that is for ever disembodied,

be near us when we build our city, indulge  
the builders' plan with starshine, turn the brick  
with the courses of dawn, and let the sun divulge  
the secret of his gold arithmetic—

one among many. Be near us when we stumble  
through myriad shapes, wherewith when thou art  
dim, age  
muffles the streets of vision, and when these crumble,  
let us remember of what they were the image.

Be near us when we fall, and, helpless, gaze on  
the turrets, and tall cathedrals, that we planned  
to be the music of life in diapason,  
unravelling through silence, strand by strand;

## VENI CREATOR!

when in the East the dawns we pass from wait red  
and angry, till our own creations fear us,  
when love that was the builder turns to hatred  
of those for whom he builded, then be near us.

Be near us, when the uncelestial city  
in stone and marble coldly stands apart  
against the sky with room for all save pity,  
possessing everything except its heart.

Creator of the spirit, when a King  
sent out the last crusade he built for this  
a city in the marshes, encompassing  
his dream with wall and tower and fortalice.

A year he wrought it, and every stone he laid  
was quarried in your Westering islands, set  
with mortar to catch the East in ambuscade,  
and what he built with vision is lovely yet.

But for his fleet the ecstasy, turned traitor,  
faded, and only the cry remains of them  
across the evening sea “Veni Creator!”—  
only the cry and lost Jerusalem.

Be near us when we build like him, and when  
the stone remains, but all the dream we built for  
shivers and cools, and the lost souls of men,  
dying, forget all that those souls were spilt for.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

Send the crusaders, spirit, through sunset drawn  
along the Western sea-marks of thy Will.  
Be near us always, but most of all when dawn  
breaks, and we see thy City on the hill.

# SARAH GERTRUDE MILLIN

## UP FROM GILGAL

### I

**I**T WAS night, and there was dancing on the ship sailing from Cape Town to Southampton. The wooden bar that divided the first class from the second class was away, and passengers from both classes were dancing together, and on rows of deck-chairs reclined the people who were not dancing.

In the second row of deck-chairs on the first-class side sat Mrs. Elder with three other women. The four of them sat there every night, watching. They would have liked, very much, to dance too: they danced at home, for they could at least depend on their poor grumbling old husbands to dance with them. But now they were travelling, for one reason or another, without their husbands, and they were of no interest to any other men. So they listened to the bad music, and commented on the dancers, and felt how melancholy it was to be getting old, and remembered with yearning and humility and gratitude their husbands, who, they could see now, were the only human beings on whom they could depend—through the power of habit and pity and an ancient loyalty—for everything.

Mrs. Elder had not dreamt it would be like this. She came from

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

a Transvaal town which had a white population of five thousand, and her husband was the magistrate, and, of course, a man of great importance. The Elders lived at the Residency, the best house in the town; and if any influential person came there he had dinner with them—even the administrator of a province or the Prime Minister of the Union. And then Mrs. Elder distributed the school prizes and ran the various committees. It would have been strange indeed, if at a dance, she had lacked partners.

Besides, she was not really so unattractive. It was true her skin was burnt and dried and wrinkled by the African sun, and there was a piece of flesh joining her neck to her chin which grew taut when she turned her head, and she was a little too stout. But she was not so old as one would have expected an English-woman to be who looked like that: she was thirty-seven; and she had big, candid grey eyes, a straight, short nose, and richly brown hair. It wasn't, after all, a serious misfortune for a man to dance with her.

Yet here she had sat night after night, throughout the voyage, and it had never even entered any man's head that she could *want* to dance, that she was *entitled* to dance. She had sat with these three other women whose husbands had been left at home, and they were looked on—if they were looked on at all—just as four middle-aged women to whom one sometimes said a word or two, and there was an end of it.

She should not have linked herself with these women. She saw it now. They were women of forty-eight or fifty, and when she joined their group she became automatically one of them: she partook of their quality of dereliction, she was no more than the fourth side of a shut-in square.

## UP FROM GILGAL

No one even asked her to play deck-tennis. She did not expect it of the jolly young ones. But the elderly bald men, whose white flannels opened at the pleats and were strained about their large waists—why did they not invite her to join them in a mixed double? What right had they to be so indecently convinced of their invincible maleness?

She played bridge every afternoon with her friends; and often they gossiped; and in the nights they sat here and commented on the dancers, and noticed who the people were who strolled away after the dances with their partners to make a little love, because if their husbands or wives were on board, that was really the only chance they had.

And there was a pain in her heart when she thought that this voyage to England was the great event of her life—even although it had come about only because her mother was so seriously ill in England. For her husband's salary was not so grand as his magisterial position—there were three children—they had never been able to save enough to go on such a voyage together.

Out of sheer loneliness she wrote to her husband every day. She told him what a glorious holiday she was having—except, of course, for her anxiety about her mother, and her longing for him and the children. Her husband was greatly moved by her letters. He had not known she loved him as deeply as all that. “And who do you think is on board?” she asked in her very first letter. “Charles Devenish. In the first class! Naturally, I haven't spoken to him.”

No, she hadn't spoken to him. But then neither had he spoken to her. He was dancing now with quite a young girl.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

### II

Mrs. Elder had first met Charles Devenish fifteen years ago. At that time her husband was magistrate of a little town called Gilgal, the centre of a diamond-digging district. Since then they had been transferred five times; and, although they were now higher in the service, they possessed hardly a household article that did not show the marks of all this moving about, and their children were in lower classes than they should have been, and they were still very poor.

They had been as happy in Gilgal as anywhere. It was a hot, dry, yellow, sandy, treeless, iron-roofed, ugly little town near a river which was often dry in the winter, for then no rains fell in the Transvaal. It had been called Gilgal because the first diggers had encamped near twelve large stones, and, thinking of the dry river they had just crossed to get there, a man had laughingly asked if these were not the stones of the Jordan, and this not the Gilgal of God's command.

Gilgal, however, had not grown beyond one street. In that street were two hotels where men came to drink, the bank, the chemist's shop, several general stores, the school, and the magistrate's court. Yet the Elders were young in those days, all life seemed young, there was a sort of little society, and they were important in it.

To this society Charles Devenish was an event. He had come to Gilgal no one knew why, and he never did the prospecting of which he vaguely spoke. But people did not ask many questions in Gilgal, and he was thirty, he had a manner and an accent, and his clothes were good.

## UP FROM GILGAL

The ladies invited him to afternoon tea and tennis, and he made love to several of them.

They told one another, in a competitive spirit, about this love he made, and they exaggerated his advances and their withdrawals—as if it were quite easy for a Gilgal woman to find personable admirers: as if they all knew what it was to keep a man's passion at bay. It was at this time it became customary for the Gilgal people to wear evening clothes at one another's dinner parties. For, without any warning at all, Mr. Devenish had arrived at his first dinner in Gilgal—dressed.

And so things went on for nearly two months. And then one day a sum of money came for him through the bank, and immediately everyone understood the sort of prospecting Mr. Devenish did, and why he was in Gilgal. He was in Gilgal just because he happened to be in Gilgal, and because he did not much care where he was so long as he could get what he wanted.

And that was, it seemed, a very large quantity of drink. As soon as his money came Charles Devenish went to the bar of the Empire Hotel and drank with and against everybody. He arrived at the bar early in the morning, and he stayed there all day, and all next day, and the whole week through, and as long as he had any cash, and as long after that as the barman would let him. It was as if he had had just enough control over himself to await the coming of this money.

Then, for a while, he disappeared.

When he showed himself again he still had his manner and his accent, but people looked at him now with different eyes. They forgave him his lapse—for everyone in those digging districts knew of men who had drinking periods and then, for months

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

afterwards, stayed sober—only they no longer acknowledged his superiority over them. And when the ladies asked him to their houses they did it as if they were being kind.

Even Mrs. Elder, who often, without any sense of disloyalty to her husband, wondered if the love of a good woman couldn't reform him, was kind in that way. But he looked at her with careless, indifferent, unashamed eyes that, in some unaccountable way, transferred the consciousness of any misdemeanour from him to her; and sometimes he came to her as to the other people who had forgiven him, and sometimes he did not. It didn't seem, really, as though he wanted all this forgiveness, or the love, just romantically unhallowed, of a magistrate's wife.

And then, one day, another thing happened. Mr. Devenish was due at Mrs. Elder's for tea, and he went for a walk with her cook instead. There was no secrecy about it. Down the only street of the town they strolled, and he was a little more deferential towards her than, in these days, towards her mistress. He was carrying a parcel for her too. The day's meat, the people said.

It was an insult to all Gilgal, yet most of the ladies could only laugh to hide their chagrin. The doctor's wife, however (who was like that), declared that to bring the doctrine of true knighthood down to its foundations, why should not a gentleman assist a housemaid with her pail, or a washerwoman with her bundle, or Mrs. Elder's cook with her parcel of meat? Was chivalry, and ladies first, and all that sort of thing, only a matter of class? For her part, she said, she was prepared to receive Mr. Devenish as if nothing had happened.

But Mrs. Elder was not. For she wasn't, like the doctor's wife, fifty, she was twenty-two, and she was unhappy because he had



A. K. Lawrence



## UP FROM GILGAL

touched her feelings more than a little, and it was, finally, to her he had forgotten or neglected to come, and with her cook he had walked instead.

She wanted to dismiss the cook. But Mr. Elder wouldn't allow it. "What should the girl have done?" he demanded. "Refused to let him carry her meat?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Elder, her throat tight and sore.

"Oh, nonsense," commented Mr. Elder. "Do you expect a Gilgal poor-white to know more than an English gentleman? If you want to kick anyone out, let it be Devenish."

But no one was henceforth given the opportunity to kick Mr. Devenish out, for he spent too much time with the Elders' cook. The doctor's wife suggested that he found her, perhaps, more amusing than Gilgal society; but she could not really believe it. And when she saw him one day walking with the cook under the thorny mimosa trees just outside Gilgal, the mimosa whose scent was so clean and wistful in the hot, still air—like a longing never to be fulfilled—then even she could no longer laugh.

All Gilgal dropped Mr. Devenish, and Mr. Elder allowed his wife to dismiss the cook.

### III

And now there came another phase in the Gilgal career of Mr. Devenish. The hotel proprietor said he could not keep Mr. Devenish in his hotel unless he paid for his accommodation. Mr. Devenish explained that he was expecting money again next month. The hotel proprietor, however, asked him why he had not given him any of the money he had received last month. Mr. Devenish answered pleasantly that he, the hotel

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

proprietor, had had all of it. "But, as to that, there's money owing in the bar too," said the hotel proprietor. And he looked very disagreeable.

Mr. Devenish stared at him a moment.

"I'm arranging to leave your hotel to-day," he said in a manner that implied he had found the hotel not very satisfactory.

So now he bought himself a tent, and cooked his own food. He bought things at one of the stores, and would have managed quite well if the storekeeper had not, like the proprietor of the Empire Hotel, talked so much about accounts. Why, asked the storekeeper, in due course, had he not been paid out of the new money that had come to Mr. Devenish and all gone into the bar of the Royal Hotel?

Mr. Devenish said he was not in the habit of bandying words with his tradesmen.

He spoke in these days, to the people he casually met, of leaving Gilgal. And yet he did not leave. For, just about this time, an awkward thing happened. No money came for him to the bank.

This was really a terrible period. He was no longer getting credit anywhere. For a while he did a little borrowing from the diggers who had drunk with him in the bars. Then he exchanged his watch for groceries. Occasionally he had a meal at the home of Mrs. Elder's ex-cook. There were a lot of poor-white children about who made a disrespectful noise when he came.

Presently he sold his tent.

One morning an elderly prospector, who made Gilgal the headquarters for his unsuccessful expeditions, found him sitting, dazed, on the bench under the verandah of the Royal Hotel.

## UP FROM GILGAL

The bar was not yet open. The prospector looked carefully at Mr. Devenish.

"You come home with me," he said.

"Home" was a room made of corrugated iron with a window that was a single pane of glass. A dirty mattress lay on the floor, with several old blankets tumbled about on it. There were also a few pieces of crockery on a box turned upside down to make a table; a fork, a knife and a spoon; a smaller box with groceries in it; a chair, a saucepan, a kettle, and a paraffin stove.

"We'll have breakfast," said the prospector.

He opened a tin of sardines, and made some coffee.

The eyes of Mr. Devenish grew more bloodshot.

"I'm expecting some money any day now," he murmured.

"That's all right," said the prospector. "You can stay here till it comes."

It did come, and then they both went to the bar and drank. For the prospector, too, had not arrived at his present pass through excessive praying. And, in future, whenever money came, they disposed of it together in the bar of the Royal Hotel. For, as Mr. Devenish had never stayed at the Royal Hotel, and had consequently not had any discussions about accounts there, he preferred it to the Empire Hotel. Only when there was no money was Mr. Devenish ever again something like the Mr. Devenish who had once been so pleasantly received by the ladies of Gilgal.

He had not, of course, visited their houses for many months but they were now able to speak to him when they met him. They were able to speak because it no longer mattered whether

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

they spoke or not. Mrs. Elder alone could not bring herself to do so—because of those romantic feelings of hers he had once touched and then shamed.

But this stage, too, passed. Perhaps, before he came to Gilgal, he had lived with people who had done for him what they could, and so that was why he had arrived there no worse than he was. Now, however, he lived with the old prospector, and they went downhill together. Mr. Devenish was not even clean in these days. His wardrobe consisted of what he wore, and he wore it a long time. His very manner was only a mirage of his old manner. All he kept intact was his accent.

One day the prospector found some asbestos. He naturally sold his claims for too little—other men afterwards made tens of thousands of pounds out of that asbestos field, but he was not dissatisfied. He added another room of corrugated iron to the first, took a half-caste woman, bought some fowls, and was very happy. He said Mr. Devenish could remain with him, and Mr. Devenish did so. Mrs. Elder's cook married the driver of a transport-wagon.

### IV

Mr. Devenish was not greatly affected by the coming of the Great War. Eighteen months of it passed without agitating him. Then, so it was reported, he got a letter to say that two of his brothers had been killed. A week later he was gone from Gilgal. No one was very interested in his going, not even the doctor's wife (the Elders had left Gilgal by that time) or the prospector. The prospector had given up drink and was deeply domesticated now, and, in his heart, he was relieved about the departure of

## UP FROM GILGAL

Mr. Devenish, because, in a two-roomed house, and with a new yellow baby, it was more comfortable without him.

So he went, unsped, and was forgotten. . . .

Until, one day, towards the end of the War, Mr. Elder saw something about a Captain Charles Devenish, M. C., in a newspaper.

"Captain!" said Mrs. Elder, and thought of the days when he had come to Gilgal and the days when he had left. "M. C.! Impossible! It must be another man."

But it was not another man. The War had resurrected Charles Devenish.

And here it was ten years after the War, it was over twelve years since he had left Gilgal, and what, thought Mrs. Elder passionately, as she sat there on the deck-chairs of the left-behind and cast-aside watching him dance with that young girl, what had happened to them both during that time? Nothing to her, a virtuous woman, except decay and degeneration—at least, so it seemed now, here on the ship. But to him, who had snuffled in the slime, soaring life.

She had not felt like this when she had met him on board the first day. She had walked past him with the old contempt of Gilgal; with the contempt of the magistrate's wife for her cook's lover, for the drunkard who had lived with a man who lived with a coloured woman. And he had walked past her—he still did—as if he had no memory of her.

But could that be, she now asked herself, agonized, could he truly have forgotten her? Had she become unrecognizable in twelve years? Was her essential being gone with her youth so that a man might look at her and see not a trace of it left?

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

Her mind returned to the beginning of the voyage when she had looked forward to having an exciting—even a possibly romantic—voyage. How often had she not heard from women of their exciting and romantic voyages? Everyone went a little mad on ships, they said. There was no time or space or past or future or success or failure on ships, they said. Things just happened. They happened wildly to anybody.

It seemed, however, that they did not happen always. The days had passed and no adventures had come to Mrs. Elder. What did she, a middle-aged woman going to see a sick mother, a virtuous woman with a husband and children, want of romantic adventures? What indeed? she asked herself bitterly, sitting here, because of her loneliness, with these three other women who also sat with one another because of their loneliness.

"Yes, a man of forty-five or fifty and a woman of forty-five or fifty are very different things," said one of the three as she watched Charles Devenish dancing with his pretty girl. "Would that man come to me for a dance—and I'm no older than he is? Of course not! Why should he? He can get any of the young girls to dance with him. Only too happy—a popular man like that!"

Mrs. Elder opened her mouth to speak of Gilgal. But there was a rancour and a sadness in her heart that would not let her. It was as if she could not betray a something in herself. She remembered how he had once touched her feelings. She wished, with a longing that pressed against the walls of her being like an instrument of the Inquisition, that he would come to her now and lift her out of the cast-aside and left-behind. For she could see now: without the small-town dignity her husband gave her,

## UP FROM GILGAL

without his affection and support, that was all she was: in her own right, nobody wanted her.

But this man, she had known him in his degradation, she had felt herself infected by his shame—had she no meaning even for him?

The dance ended, and he passed her, chatting with his partner. He found her a seat, and went to fetch her some refreshment.

Mrs. Elder had not thought of doing it, but she did it: she followed him hastily through a door. She touched him on the arm.

“Don’t you remember me, Mr. Devenish?” she said. “Mrs. Elder, of Gilgal.”

“Why, Mrs. Elder, why, of course,” he said, as if at a revelation. “Of Gilgal. And how is Johanna?”

Johanna was the name of Mrs. Elder’s cook of fifteen years ago.

She wanted to remind him passionately that they had long since been moved up from Gilgal, and how should she know anything of Johanna? But she could not.

He smiled at her—a still sort of smile.

She faced him in a profound silence.

She understood. The magistrate’s wife, and the magistrate’s wife’s cook—he meant that they were equally behind him. What he wanted her to understand, in the bravado of his hatred of the past, was that she and Johanna and Gilgal and himself in Gilgal, were all linked together in his mind as part of an old shabbiness he had outlived and now chose to ignore.

“May I get you something to drink?” he asked her, too politely, and still smiling.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

She hated him so, she would have liked the ship to go down with both of them, with all the happy young people, and the elderly cheerful people, and the three women with whom she sat and sat watching the dancing of others.

Her heart ached with the sorrow of being outside things.

“Will you?” she said, and self-contemned, returned his smile.

W. H. DAVIES  
THIS BANTAM STAR

**I**S THIS the Blackbird's richest song—  
Is this his greatest hour?  
And still the Bee stands on his head,  
To suck his sweetest flower;  
While I, a poet, with my pen  
Make music only known to men.

How merrily this bantam world  
Can clap his wings and crow!  
Is there a merrier world than this?  
“No,” says the Blackbird, “No:  
No other worlds, though bigger far,  
Can match this little bantam star!”

F. TENNYSON JESSE

## CARIBBEAN WATERS

**S**OONER or later you will hear a friend saying: "I am going on a cruise to the West Indies," or you may even announce your intention of doing so yourself. It all sounds so easy if you are content to follow out a schedule arranged for you by some obliging shipping company. If you want to go to the out-of-the-way places, it is, on the other hand, extremely difficult. When I spent some four or five months down in the Caribbean and along the Spanish Main—which does not, as some people seem to imagine, mean the sea, but the mainland of South America—I found that all the ships seemed to go the wrong way.

It looks so simple on the map—the circlet of islands that rims the sea around seems so unbroken that my plan, which was to follow the coast from Colon in the Canal Zone down to Colombia and Venezuela to Trinidad, then to go along the southernmost rim and on up the right-hand side, sounded the simplest in the world. Unfortunately, most ships apparently go round exactly the other way—they all seem to go and never to come, so to speak. And those that do go the right way skip certain islands in the most capricious and arbitrary manner. All the various lines have a nasty habit of sailing the same week, so that the next week you cannot get on for love or money, and as a general

## CARIBBEAN WATERS

rule you are faced with the alternative of either having a few hours ashore in each island, to "trip" around in a car and see the "sights," or you are held up for a fortnight, which latter proceeding, if indulged in at every stop, would take years of crowded life. Certainly the only ideal way to see the rim of the Caribbean would be in your own yacht.

At St. Vincent I had to hire a fifteen-ton native sloop in which I sailed to St. Lucia, with many adventures such as coping with cockroaches, the ship's pig, being becalmed, being drenched through in a squall, and nearly fainting from thirst. I only found out afterwards that these little sloops are known locally as "*Maman-prend-deuils*," because when the father and sons set out to sea in them, the mother of the family automatically goes into mourning.

An added difficulty in getting about is the incapacity of shipping-agents to tell the truth, and their bland ignorance as regards any other line but their own. If you wish to find out how many ships call at a port, the only way is to walk through every street till you have discovered each agent for yourself. However, by dint of poking around Colon, I found a small Italian cargo boat just about to go down the coast to Trinidad on her way home to Genoa. She called in at Cartagena, at Porta Colombia, struck out to Curaçoa, turned shorewards again to the Venezuelan ports, shot wildly up north to Porto Rico, the American island lying between Haiti and St. Thomas on the northern rim, and finally landed me at Trinidad after a fortnight of leisurely travel, the best food I ever struck afloat, and *vin compris*, all for the sum of seven pounds!

There were drawbacks, of course. I had a deck cabin, but

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

when I opened the wardrobe door a dozen or so cockroaches swarmed out. One generally had to kill five or six before getting into one's bunk, and personally I would far sooner meet a mad dog than a cockroach. All my wails were met with unaffected surprise. *Cucurachi?* But they were not dangerous! All ships had them. And—this was the final argument—they were excellent creatures to have about the place because they kept off worse things!

Bathing was a difficulty, as the bathroom was unaccustomed to use, and one was plainly thought mad for troubling it. Also it is unusual aboard most ships to see the Captain sitting on the companion-ladder drinking champagne at ten in the morning. But he had had a hard time of it, up for three nights, and it is, after all, not in every ship that the Captain invites you upon the bridge to take the sun with his sextant, or that the Doctor produces a large Italian grammar after dinner of an evening and endeavours to get you beyond the stage when your sole remark is "I have the dog of the uncle."

The menus alone would have made life worth living. The pictures at the top were arranged with a perforation so that they could be torn off and used as postcards. The pictures themselves were what might be termed classical in character, and varied from "Susanna and the Elders" to "The Rape of Persephone." Two which appeared with some frequency were Venus surrounded by Cupids (and by very little else), and St. Mary Magdalene surrounded by cherubs. These two compositions were so alike in character that you had to read the title to make sure which was which.

We had the good fortune to be carrying a mixed Italian and

## CARIBBEAN WATERS

Spanish operetta company, part of whose agreement with the Captain was that he should stop long enough at certain ports to allow of a performance being given. The members of the company were a jolly, friendly set of beings, though only a few spoke French, and I did not find that the dog of my uncle helped me much. At my table sat the pianist, a round-faced, snub-nosed, cheery little man with wet-looking black hair, who unfortunately spent the time between courses in excavating with a toothpick and making away with the proceeds in a simple and primitive fashion. Next to him came a charming little German, so small as to be almost a dwarf. If ever a man were filled with the milk of human kindness, it was he. His face, rosy and unlined, with the sleek fair hair parted primly above it, was the face of a child, always smiling, not only with the wide mouth, but with the beaming eyes. He was bound for Bogotá with tray-loads of spectacles, because he had heard that there was no optician there. He had tried many things, always cheerily; now he was bound for remote cloud-wrapped Bogotá, lugging his spectacles up days of river-journeying, up into the hidden heart of Colombia, to sell them to the race of brigand-poets who live upon the rocky heights!

Next him sat the prima donna, a sulky-profiled, bistre-eyed woman with hair that made one understand the expression "as black as night." It was not fine or glossy, but it was so incredibly deeply dark that the vision could plunge and get lost in the blackness of it. The girl who played the *ingénue* part was a red-haired creature with pale eyes and a face exactly like an egg—a demure, heavy-lidded little wisp of a thing; next her sat a member of the chorus with a face like a sad horse, and a tiny new baby;

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her husband was a consumptive young Frenchman who played the second violin.

The opera company and the discovery of the Dutch West Indies were the most delightful things about the whole of that trip, although we put in at such marvellous places as Cartagena, that walled city where the old Spanish fortifications with their massive crenellated crests and vast buttresses tower above little palm-leaf villages that might have been plucked from the heart of the Congo; and La Guayra, set at the foot of cliff-like mountains that rise sheer from the sea. It was at La Guayra that our opera company finally left us, as they optimistically hoped that in Caracas they could make a living. I could only trust their reputation had not preceded them, for to tell the truth they were not very good, and at Puerto Cabello only a couple of days earlier, finding the audience neither big nor enthusiastic enough to satisfy them, had only given two acts of their operetta, and departing privily from the theatre by the back door, had raced for the ship—a thing that all those of us on board were very thankful for, for the Captain, who was in a bad temper, had been blowing the siren steadily for an hour.

Yes, in spite of the historic beauty of Cartagena, in spite of having nearly had the excitement of a revolution at La Guayra, and in spite of the interest of the other ports we touched at, there was certainly nothing to equal the charm of Curaçoa, which is where the curaçao comes from—a confusing mixture of spellings.

Curaçoa was settled by the Spanish early in the fourteenth century, but was afterwards taken by the Dutch, and no trace of the Spanish civilization remains in its purely Dutch atmos-

## CARIBBEAN WATERS

sphere, nor is there any hint of our own, though the island was seized by us for two brief periods. The deeply rooted and tenacious Dutch have stamped out all else for ever.

You cannot steam into a British West Indian port and say "This belongs to England," except by going on a purely negative presumption. If the town shows no particular characteristics, if it is merely the shoddy, shabby, utilitarian town of the tropics, you may safely risk that remark. But if you see a town with that peculiar genius the French have for making a thing suit its environment and still retain the gay colours, the painted domes, the florid ornament of the lightest of Latin races, you may say "This is French." Or, if you see red roofs, white pillars, clean outlines and orderly symmetry, you can say "This is the Danish West Indies," for the Americans have not wholly obliterated Danish characteristics. And if you see yellow-washed houses, clean and solid, with steep fluted roofs and curly-edged gables and white-pillared porticos, you may say "This is Curaçoa."

So far as actual beauty goes, there is little of it. The harbour itself is fine, consisting of three creeks, and on either side of the biggest lies Willemstad, connected by a pontoon bridge that pants back and forth to admit the passage of ships from the fortified harbour entrance to the coaling station. We awoke to find the air swarming with coal-dust, and to port and starboard were great blue-grey artificial mountains of it, where the stevedores ran back and forth, basket-laden, without intermission, on the side where we berthed, while on the other the lighters clustered against us like bees. Beyond the coal the island showed a deep golden brown, parched, waterless, almost tree-

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less. Yet there was beauty—the beauty of what is, excepting perhaps for the modern Scandinavian, the most beautiful domestic architecture in the world. And, lying in the still water, the lovely white schooners with their fine bows and soaring bowsprits, their carved white taffrails and lofty spars. Like white seabirds they lay, lovely vessels of the vanishing past.

And there is much of the past to think of in Curaçoa. This is the port where the piratical sea-rovers fled for safety, and where the proud many-decked ships of the line rested from their wounds. The beauty of the past and the stamp of character lies all about—the whole a very good example of the gentle art of carrying your own atmosphere into alien parts.

By day the island was glaringly, appallingly hot, bleached and barren, tufted with cacti and aloes and a few palms, but at night, with the moonlight shining on the stately Dutch houses, and the white schooners with their greyhound lines, it was possible to imagine yourself back in the old days of sail.

In the centre of the harbour there is a depth of from eight to eleven fathoms, where a fleet of ships of the line could lie in safety, and often have. Spanish, Dutch, and English have all reflected their carved and gilded sterns, their towering sides and great spars in that clear water. And in later days the lovely clipper ships traded here, picking up a pilot, who would be waiting for them about a mile to windward of the entrance, for it was tricky work coming into harbour under sail, the channel being less than a cable's length wide. If she came from the northward a vessel would encounter a strong easterly current setting towards the shore; while the southern side of the island had to be navigated at a distance of one or two miles. The wind, if

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blowing strongly from the north-east, rushes and beats through the channel in gusts that come first from one side and then from another as in lake sailing, and a vessel would always keep one or two hawsers at hand, in a boat astern, ready to run out to the great posts placed on either side of the channel; captain and pilot alert upon the poop, keen eyes upon the sailing marks, would keep the western angle of the Rif fort directly below the sharp point of a prominence called Priest Mount; and then, when near the entrance, yards had to be braced sharp up, everything ready to clew up and anchor the instant the sails came aback. When a tall crane could be seen from the bows, opening out to the west of Fort Amsterdam, the helmsman would luff up and the warps be run out as soon as the vessel's way was lost.

Such were the anxieties of coming into harbour with a north-east wind; with the south-east wind, however, a vessel could sail right through the channel up to her anchorage, but always a vessel bound from the westward would have to try carefully the direction of the current off the main, as, though sometimes found running to the eastward, this was not invariable, and if not, then she had to stand right out to sea at once and work up to the northward, reaching off as much as forty miles. The discovery that the current was not behaving itself as usual must have been a trying one to a skipper anxious to make harbour. Yet, certainly there must have been more fun in coming into Willemstad under sail than we experienced under steam, and I looked enviously at the white schooners as I walked over the long pontoon bridge and down innumerable wharves to the theatre.

Smells, like owls and bats, seemed to have the peculiar property of waking at night, and I passed through such streaks of

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

them that the illusion of being in Holland, amongst the pictur-esque but odorous canals of Amsterdam, was stronger than ever.

The theatre was already full, in fact the play had begun when I arrived in company with the manager and his wife, but as guests of honour we were thrust up the hall, chairs and people being pulled aside for us, and we were set down in unenviable publicity in the front row, intermingled with the orchestra. The musicians were conscientious and did not permit the stifling heat or the fact that their very shirt-fronts were damp and limp to interfere with their efforts. The piano-stool was exactly in front of my knees, and my little friend with the round head and bad teeth pounded away gaily, a violin shrilled into my left ear, and some instrument of the oboe type into my right. I looked around and discovered that, except for the manager's wife and myself, there were no women-folk on the ground floor, but as it was obviously impossible to get out, and as I had nowhere else to go, and as—the usual comfort of the Briton—"nobody knew me," I stayed where I was. I saw the Captain and the Doctor beaming behind a discreet grill in a hot little box, the Captain having added a purple silk handkerchief, which he wore tied round his neck, to his white suit. The theatre was like nothing so much as a roofed-in jousting-list, being circled except for the proscenium by wooden galleries hung with stuff all patterned over with stars, while the roof was painted to correspond. The place was packed: evidently in spite of the short notice, the handbills, which for some obscure reason were printed in French, had proved successful in the description of the operetta as attractive to "Messieurs, dames et viveurs."

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It was played partly in Spanish and partly in Italian, according to which language the players happened to know, but the Italian parts of it were painfully clear to me. Indeed, it was quite unnecessary for the second violin to come and sit on the music-stool between the acts and explain it all to me in voluble accents.

"Have I made it clear?"

"Même trop," said I.

"I fear it is very French," he said apologetically.

It was all about a family the various members of which, unknown to each other, had each arranged to have supper with a friend in a *cabinet particulier* at the Moulin Rouge. Our prima donna, she of the Roman matron profile and black curls, wore an auburn wig and had become skittish in the grand style; while the little egg-faced girl, her hair parted as primly as ever, wore a Quakerish slip of grey satin made with what I have heard called a "modest V." All the gowns, in contradistinction to the play, were discreet to the verge of dowdiness, and in the finale of each act, when the chorus came wandering on in that inconsequent way choruses have, many members of it were attired in their usual gowns, for the good reason that they hadn't any others. The woman with the face like a sad horse, who had left her baby in the care of the stewardess, appeared in the shirtwaist and little round hat she wore every day on deck.

The plot hitched on the fact that an eccentric individual had offered a prize for the most virtuous woman, and Giovanna, the heroine, she of the chestnut wig, determined to win it, notwithstanding that she was a frequenter of the Moulin Rouge. When she met the donor of the prize in that somewhat notorious estab-

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

lishment she explained that she was there to try to reclaim sinners.

Among the extraneous characters was a travelling English-woman attired in black silk and bugles, which we all know is what an Englishwoman would wear to go a-voyaging in! She was accompanied by her manservant of the name of "Shon." He wore a suit of scarlet turkey twill, a white pith helmet and puggaree, and Wellington boots; two ginger-hued whiskers adorned his jaws and he bore a carpet-bag in either hand. The "Englishwoman" sang a song in Spanish to which Shon supplied the chorus, which consisted, very simply, of "Oh, yess, Goddam! Oh yess, Goddam!"

Laughter was drawn from one at last by the sheer force of repetition. One's resistance was broken down. The characters yelled and rushed about and fell over each other so often that though one began by being bored, one ended up helpless with mirth. Besides, it was really funny in the last act, where everyone met at breakfast, all except the mother knowing of the night's doings and all determined to keep her in ignorance. For, of course, the waiter of the evening before turned out to be the new butler, and the efforts of the men of the family to conceal their faces by holding their coffee cups firmly in their jaws by the lower rim so that the cups sat up over their noses, were quite pleasant.

Anyway the audience, whom one imagines does not get much in the way of excitement at Curaçoa, applauded wildly and everyone was pleased. And we all walked back to the harbour through the milky moonlight and the smells and rowed back to the ship —past the white schooners that glimmered like ghost ships through the night, and as we rounded the corner of the lagoon

## CARIBBEAN WATERS

we saw our own port and starboard lights glowing above us, their brilliant red and green the only notes of positive colour to be seen. She looked quite big, our little steamer, rearing up her straight black sides, pricked by round holes of light, between the two strips of land.

We slipped slowly out of the lagoon, the quiet houses with their shuttered windows sleeping to right and left of us—the moonlight on their fluted roofs and flat pale faces; only the pontoon bridge showed signs of life as it went rippling through the water to lie against the land and allow us a clear way. So, quietly, under just such a foxy moon as this, did the old buccaneers many a time slip out from that cliff-ringed inner lagoon from whose heights their look-out watched, and, making the open sea, captured the Spanish galleons. The bridge swung across behind us, and with nothing but a fading wake to mark that we had been there, we passed out between the blots of rounded dark made by the forts and met a faint wind blowing from the coast of Venezuela.

And at La Guayra, where, as at Cartagena, a long jetty with a railway track along it connects with the town, we lost our opera company. They piled themselves into an expectant train with their ninety-four trunks. I bade farewell to all my particular friends—the pianist with the sleek round head and the bad teeth, the consumptive-looking young French second violin, the Roman matron of a prima donna, the girl with the red hair and the egg-shaped face, and the little woman like a sad horse whose incredibly small baby shared her arms with a bandbox. We all leaned over the rail and watched them as they poured into the little train and exuded from its windows.

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

I myself left my Italian cargo boat at Port of Spain in Trinidad, and though after that I went in many vessels of differing nationalities, including the little "*Maman-prend-deuil,*" I never found anything more amusing or, despite the cockroaches, more comfortable, and my fellow-passengers never charmed me quite so much as did the members of that cheerful down-at-heel opera company.

EDITH SITWELL

THE SCOTCH RHAPSODY  
FROM "FAÇADE"

O NOT take a bath in Jordan,  
Gordon,  
On the holy Sabbath, on the peaceful day,"  
Said the huntsman playing on his old bagpipe,  
Boring to death the pheasant and the snipe,  
Boring the ptarmigan and grouse for fun,  
Boring them worse than a nine-bore-gun,  
Till the flaxen leaves where the prunes are ripe  
Heard the tartan wind a-blaring in the pipe,  
And they heard McPherson say:  
"Where do the waves go? what hotels  
Hide their bristles and their gay ombrelles?"  
And would there be room, would there be *room*,  
*would* there be room for me?"

There is a hotel at Ostend,  
Cold as the wind, without an end,  
Haunted by ghostly poor relations  
Of Bostonian conversations  
Like bagpipes rotting through the walls,  
And there the pearl-ropes fall like shawls  
With a noise of marine waterfalls

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And "Another little drink wouldn't do us any harm"  
Pierces through the Sabbatical calm.  
And that is the place for me!

So do not take a bath in Jordan,  
Gordon,  
On the holy Sabbath, on the peaceful day—  
Or you'll never go to Heaven, Gordon McPherson,  
And (speaking purely as a private person)  
That is the place, that is the *place*, that is the place for me!

# REBECCA WEST

## ELEGY

**H**OW awkward that I should have met you when I am behaving so badly, walking along the street shrieking with laughter! But you will understand that I can't help laughing when I tell you what has happened to-day. It's funny, so funny! You really must excuse me. But listen! Listen! I want you to hear it. You see, it is about Mother.

It began this morning. We were having breakfast in the morning-room, as we still do even though Mother's dead, and we know perfectly well that it's absurd and uncivilized to eat breakfast down in a basement in the bowels of the earth. We might just as well have breakfast in the dining-room. We might just as well have breakfast in our rooms. Goodness knows what all those servants do. But we go on having breakfast down there, just the same as ever, except that John isn't there. He is married now, you know. I don't think his wife has a very good time. It isn't that she can't make pie like Mother made it, as they say in America, it's more that she can't make life an apple-pie bed like Mother made it. He looks at her in a disappointed way all the time, though she's a dear little thing. Well, except for his being gone, it's the same as ever at breakfast. Lydia and I sit opposite each other and drink tea instead of coffee, because Mother

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thought it was more wholesome for us, and we read *The Times* instead of *The Morning Post*, because in 1895 the wife of one of *The Morning Post* editors stood on Mother's train at the Guildhall; and we feel a little bored because the electric bell never whirrs to tell us that Mother's been washed, and had her tea and toast, and wants to see us. It's pretty dreary, really.

But this morning Cook herself brought in the letters and put down a parcel right in the middle of the table and looked at us in a queer sort of way. "It's for the mistress," she said; and we all looked at each other. We did so much hate other people touching her things that we all felt frightened at the idea of opening it, although it's two years now since Mother died. I said, "It looks presenty. I wonder who knows Mother well enough to send her a present and yet doesn't know she's gone?" and I picked up a knife and cut the string. And there were two little china figures. Oh, nothing good. Old, about a hundred years, I suppose, but coarse English porcelain, the usual shepherd and shepherdess, very ordinary in design. And in the middle of the tissue-paper was a letter, a badly written letter from somebody called Annie Lumsden who lived in Lupus Street: and it said that her husband had died last week, and he'd always wanted Mother to have these figures, because they were the best thing he'd got, and Mother would understand. She said he had talked of Mother on the very day he died.

I said, "It's somebody Mother's been kind to! It's somebody we don't know about! You don't remember anything about it, do you, Lydia?" At first Lydia said that she thought she did; that she'd heard the name of John Lumsden some time or other. But I knew she was only pretending. She's five years older than

## ELEGY

I am, and although we're nearly middle-aged—quite middle-aged, I suppose, now!—she's still rather elder-sisterly and likes to pretend she knows all sorts of things about Mother that I don't. But I didn't believe her. I said: "No, this is something new about her! Where is Lupus Street? Down in Pimlico? Let's go there at once and see if they'll tell us." But Lydia wouldn't go. She said she'd promised to go to the Settlement and cut out for the next sewing party. She isn't really very keen on finding out things about Mother. Though she always came to Mother before she went out and asked her what dress she should wear, right up to the day of her death, she doesn't really care for her the way I do.

So I went by myself. I was out of the house by ten, but of course it took me quite a time to get to Pimlico. I had to cross London. I sometimes wish we didn't live right up there in St. John's Wood; it's a long way out and the house is much too big for us now. But I don't believe we'll ever make up our minds to sell that house. And anyway, we might find ourselves in Pimlico! What a place! But the room, when I found Mrs. Lumsden, wasn't so bad. It was a second-floor back, quite light and airy, and she kept it beautifully clean and neat. Poor dear, I don't see how she could see to do it, because her poor old eyes were swollen with weeping. That's one of the things that made me feel there isn't any sense in anything, the way people that other people are fond of are allowed to die.

Well, Annie Lumsden was a nice old lady, a sort of cook person, only she hadn't been in service, and she wore a black dress with boot-buttons all the way down the bodice. She made the greatest fuss of me when she heard who I was, and dusted chairs

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

like anything. So I gave her the china figures, and explained to her that Mother was dead, and that I'd guessed from the letter there was some kind of a story. At first she looked funny, and didn't seem to want to tell me. But I said: "Oh, Mrs. Lumsden, if I told you that I knew something terribly nice about Mr. Lumsden, and I didn't tell you, wouldn't you feel hurt?" And then she softened, and wriggled on her chair, and said that years and years ago Mother had been very kind to Mr. Lumsden, and they hadn't ever forgotten it. Then I said: "Oh, Mrs. Lumsden! I know Mother was kind to lots and lots of people, but I want to know the way she did it. She had a special way of doing things, and when people tell me all about it, it's as if I had her back again. Please, please tell me everything."

It was hard for her to do it, but I couldn't let her off. She got quite pink, which showed up under her white hair (I wonder if Mother would ever have turned white—even when she died she scarcely had a streak of grey), and then she hummed and hawed, and said that long ago there had been a dock strike which had put the whole East End out of employment, and she and Mr. Lumsden had just been married a year then, and she was going to have a baby. After he'd been out of a job for six months he'd got quite reckless and he'd gone out—the poor old thing had tears in her eyes and she bit her lips—begging round where the houses were big. "And he went out to where your pore mother was living at the time—Muswell 'Ill, it was, and—and—" She couldn't go on. But I was on my feet, I was clapping my hands. For I remembered. "Oh, don't go on!" I cried. "You needn't go on. I remember, I remember!"

I could remember it perfectly, though till that minute it had

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been utterly forgotten! Why, I must have been tiny, for that day Mother carried me downstairs in her arms, and she never picked us up when we were old enough to walk alone in safety. She was like a mother cat, she pushed her kittens away and watched them irritably if they weren't good and neat-footed as cats should be. She was looking after me that day herself. There weren't any servants about upstairs, and John and Lydia weren't there either. I suppose she had sent the nurse and the parlourmaid and the housemaid out with the children to some fête I was too young for. I was so happy! I remembered she washed my hands with that eager violence with which she did everything, while I looked round her bedroom; which I thought very beautiful. It was one of those hideous Victorian houses that children love, full of absurd woodwork, of cosy corners in which one might find a fairy princess asleep, of sham minstrels' galleries from which elves and gnomes might look down if one was still. I wish we had never left it. Then she carried me downstairs and I rubbed my face against her neck and was glad because it smelled of the same soap with which she had washed my hands. She put me down on the ground the minute she reached the hall, and I toddled down the corridor with one hand in hers, and the other hand up to my face so that I could enjoy the agreeable smell I had in common with my mother. From the closed door of the kitchen behind us, we could hear Charles the manservant reading something out of the papers to Lucy the cook. My mother opened a door, we were in the drawing-room. But my mother did not, as she usually did in any room which she entered except in the depths of winter, go from window to window flinging them open. Nor did she forget everything and go

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quickly to the piano and play vehement music, as she often did when she was alone with us children. Instead, she stood taut, looking at the door which led into the next room, a little library that my father used as an office. I did not like her to look like that. I pointed at some daffodils that were in a brass bowl on a table, and started to say "Pretty flowers," when her fingers slapped my mouth. She took one step backward towards the door by which we had entered, her eyes immensely wide. There could still be heard Charles's voice, reading aloud to Lucy. She crossed the room and flung open the door into the library, moved forward like a hawk, and gripped the wrist of the man who was standing there with my father's gold watch in his hand.

I could see her, my ugly little brown-faced mother! I can, you know, when people remind me of something I've seen her do, or tell me something very characteristic. It isn't often you can see the dead as plainly as if they were alive, and isn't it lovely when you can! I could see the force of her thin little body as she held him motionless, I could see the black blaze of her eyes as she scanned his white face and his shabby clothes. I could see the twist of her wrist and hear the edge of her voice as she said: "You will go round to the back door and the servants will give you something to eat."

I had followed her into the room: I stood by her at the French window as he stumbled down the iron steps that led from it to the garden, gaping back at her over his shoulder. At the foot he halted for a second, then turned to the left instead of to the right. Her hand closed on mine like a pair of pincers, and she cried out: "No! Go to the back door. You see where it is. If you do not I shall scream, and you will be caught long before

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you get to the gate.” I remember how he wavered weakly on his feet, and slunk to the right. Once he was gone she looked down on the watch in her hand. I am not sure if she did or did not say aloud what I know she was thinking of my father for having left his gold watch on a table by an open window in a lonely house with grounds. Then she turned to his bureau, found a certain drawer, and took out some money. I said something, but she did not hear. We went back into the drawing-room; it all gets confused, I can’t quite remember. Lucy came in, or it might have been Charles, and Mother said—I think she said, I am sure she said: “Well, if you are too grand to give him dinner, I will give it to him myself.” Lucy, or it might have been Charles, went out. Later the man came back. I was given a model of the Taj Mahal to play with, he and my mother talked a long time, it grew dark, either I went to sleep, or it was evening, I don’t know. But now I could read the rest of the story.

“Oh, Mrs. Lumsden, didn’t she frighten your husband out of his life?” I laughed. I could remember her pecking at him like a little bird.

“Why, he told me he nearly dropped dead!” the old thing said. “And so did I, when she came to see me. You know what she did for us?”

When she said that I cried out: “What did she do for you? Did she do more than just give you money? Oh, tell me, tell me!”

“Do more for us than give us money?” the poor dear said. “Why, that was welcome enough, but it was just the beginning! She gave my husband a letter to your uncle, Mr. John Cassilis, Miss, and he made John his handy-man up at his Museum of Colonial Antiques. And then he got to be janitor, and we were

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there up till two years ago, when they let him go on a pension. And that's why we've always been so grateful to your pore mother!"'

So I said: "Oh, now I know just how it was! I've seen her be kind to lots of people in a funny way. It was a funny way, wasn't it? She was as kind as kind can be, yet she never said a kind word, did she?"

And Mrs. Lumsden said: "That's just it, Miss! Not a kind word. She might have been bickering with one, sometimes. I remember the first time she came to see me was when the baby was born; she didn't even look at it, or me, much. She just went over its clothes, and told me one or two things that was wrong with them, and told me not to grudge any pain or trouble I might 'ave with 'im, because, she says, 'I find my children are all the pride and joy I have in life.'"

I cried out: "Oh, did she say that, Mrs. Lumsden, did she say that?" But I knew she had said that. Awful it used to seem sometimes, you know, her withered old face on the pillow, calling out as if she were cross, "Where is John? He's out, is he? Why is he out? Where is Lydia? In her room reading a book? Tell her to come and read it here." But that was what it was really: "I find my children are all the pride and joy I have in life."

But why—I couldn't understand why they didn't know she was dead. I would have thought they would have gone on hearing from her. She didn't let people go as a rule. I said: "But didn't she come and see you again?"

"Oh, lots and lots of times until"—the old thing looked a little embarrassed—"till about ten years ago. And John blamed me over that. You see, I had news that my son's wife had had a

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baby, and she came to see me that afternoon, so I told her about it. And I asked her if she was a grandmother, and she looked funny, and said: 'No, none of my children have ever married,' and I knew she didn't like it. And she didn't come near us again."

Fancy Mother minding as much as that! But how did she ever think we were going to marry when nobody looked at us if she was anywhere near? And how did she ever expect us to get interested in anybody when we had her! I wish she hadn't minded as much as that.

I sat for a little while with Mrs. Lumsden. There wasn't anything to be done for her; she was all right, she was going over to live with her son at Bromley, and help with the children. When I got up to say good-bye to her she said: "I was silly not to tell you all about it at once. Because your pore mother was right. She said I ought to be proud of it. She said to me, she did, once when I was grumbling a bit at John: 'Don't you ever forget, your man stole for you.'"

I couldn't speak for a little. That was why she used to sit at the piano and play her heart out in that romantic music, Schumann and Brahms. That's what she missed out of life, what none of us gave her: the thing that makes a man steal for a woman. Father, John, Lydia, me. We gave her all sorts of things, but not a bit of that. We aren't like that.

Then Mrs. Lumsden said: "I wonder where I'd be now if your pore mother had sent my John to prison. I wonder where my son would be. And John wouldn't have had a funeral like he did. He was looked up to, John was."

It was queer to think how Mother had saved the whole lot of

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them. She'd just picked the family up, like a bird picking up a worm in its beak, and run off with them: only not to devour them, to save them. She did that to everybody. She did that to me, somehow, by caring so much for me. I won't ever be alone, because I've had her. Maybe she kept me from other people, but maybe other people would never have made me feel sure they cared for me the way I was sure she cared for me. It was dreadful to think she'd never got what she wanted.

I left that house in Lupus Street in a kind of ecstasy; and yet I felt miserable. I loved having Mother brought back to me like this, and I loved knowing this new thing about her. I wanted to tell somebody about it. Somehow I felt that would help. At first I couldn't think of anybody. John's in the City, of course. Lydia I didn't want to tell about it at all, because of this suspicion I have that she doesn't want to know any more about Mother. Then it struck me that there was Uncle John, quite close, in his house at Eaton Place, and he's there nearly all day now he's given up his work at the Museum. And he must have known about it! Since he gave Lumsden the job as janitor he must have known about it all the time. So I hurried along there, and I burst in and found him at his bureau, with his black skull-cap on.

"Uncle John!" I cried. "I know all about Lumsden!"

"About Lumsden? Who's Lumsden?"

"Lumsden! The janitor!"

"Oh, up at the Museum! Well, what about him?"

"How he stole Father's gold watch!"

"Lumsden stole your father's gold watch! What on earth are you talking about? Lumsden never stole anything in his life!"

"Yes, he did! Don't you remember how he came to you?"

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"Yes, he came with a letter of recommendation from your mother."

"Well, that's how she came across him! He got into the library by the steps up from the garden when he'd come to beg, and he'd picked up Father's gold watch, and she made him drop it, and sent him round to the kitchen for a meal, and gave him money, and a letter to you——"

"What!" He threw his pen down on the carpet and beat on the air with both his fists. He has a terrible temper, it's well known in the family. "Do you mean to say this fellow was a common thief and your mother found him pilfering your father's gold watch?"

"Oh, but it was the first time, and his wife was——"

"Answer yes or no." He loves saying that.

"Well, yes!"

He was so angry that he snatched off his skull-cap and crumpled it up, and flung it in the fireplace. "I'd have you know that your mother said in that letter of recommendation that she'd employed him as a handyman herself for eight years and found him thoroughly respectable! She knew I wouldn't have had such a character inside the place for anything in the world! Oh, that's so like your mother!"

I stood dazed. And then, slowly it came back to me, that in the drawing-room at Muswell Hill ever so long ago, when I was playing on the floor, I had lifted my eyes from the model of the Taj Mahal and watched my mother as she sat at her writing-table; and that first she had gazed in front of her, and tapped her pen on the inkwell, the way people do when they are pondering what to write, and then she had started, as if she had had an idea, and

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—oh, I could hear and see it quite distinctly across the thirty-five years or so—she broke into a long, low chuckle. My naughty little mother! who had a husband like Father and a brother like Uncle John, and yet thought it must be lovely to have a man who'd steal for his woman when she was hungry, and made Uncle John give a home to such a man, for all his principles, and chuckled as she did it! Oh, my naughty mother! It's no wonder Lydia doesn't want to find out anything more about her than she need! Oh, my poor mother, how she was surrounded by strangers all her days!

I hope the old man wasn't offended. I turned round and walked out of the house. I must have walked quite a long way since—this is ever so far from Eaton Place, isn't it?—but I can't stop laughing. Partly because I can still hear Mother's chuckle, and when she laughed everyone else wanted to laugh too. And partly because it seems so funny that people like Uncle John go on and on living, and it's two years since Mother died.

BLISS CARMAN

# FOREVER AND FOREVER

**F**ROM the sea-light of Yarmouth to the headlands of  
Bras d'Or,  
From the swinging tides of Fundy to the wild  
Southern Shore,  
The Gaspereau Valley, the dikes of Grand Pré,  
Farms and mines and fishing fleets, river, lake and bay,  
Lunenburg and Halifax and lovely Margaree,  
Is all the Land of Acadie, the Sweetheart of the Sea.

Sweet beyond forgetting with mayflowers in Spring,  
At rest in hazy August when the busy crickets sing,  
Rich when Autumn splendour dyes many a wooded vale  
Where romance still lingers beside the Glory Trail,—  
In Louisburg, Shelburne, and Shubenacadie,—  
Bides the Darling of the Snowflakes, the Sweetheart of the Sea.

In days of wood and sail, from her teeming yards and slips  
Down across the world and back went her trading ships.  
Still from all her harbours the tramps and liners ply,  
Trailing from every sea-lane their smoke upon the sky,  
And still her sons and lovers, in whatever port they be,  
Are heart-fast forever with the Sweetheart of the Sea.

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On a day in early June when a young lad was I,  
I was caught in a charm like a wild bird's cry,  
With the sorcery of Summer on the marshes by the tide,  
And apple blossoms snowing down by every roadside.  
'Twas the glory of the world laid a spell on me,  
And I gave my heart away to the Sweetheart of the Sea.

Then I heard a voice saying, "You shall walk alone,  
You shall have nothing that you can call your own,  
But a handful of apples. That will be enough,  
For you shall have everything. You shall have love.  
From the tyranny of riches you shall go foot-free,  
Given all to beauty and the Sweetheart of the Sea."

And so it came about the years were blown away,  
Light as flying leaves or the dog upon the bay,  
While I must seek my fortune over many lands,  
A follower of dreams with nothing in his hands.  
But always in his mind the cry from the sea  
And the look of Heaven's glory on the face of Acadie.

Till I said upon a day, "I must go where I was born,  
To the Abanaki Country against the gates of morn,  
The marshes will be red now beside the blue streams,  
And the orchards all golden in the land of my dreams.  
I shall hear again, like an Angelus for me,  
The soft sound of ox-bells in valleys by the sea.

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“Along the quiet roads the yoked heads will go  
Swaying through the morning, rhythmical and slow.  
I shall reach trail’s end among the apple trees  
In the lee of Blomidon sheltered and at peace,—  
Where time hardly passes and true things be  
Treasured unforgotten in the heart of Acadie.”

So it was I learned, with my head upon her breast  
To crooning little soft words that love knows best,  
That soul of enchantment had never let me go  
From her dear heart’s keeping with her windflowers under  
snow. . . .

What were fame or fortune any more to me,  
Hand-fast forever with the Sweetheart of the Sea!

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH  
SUSSEX REVISITED

**B**Y THESE tokens I know that I am back in the country. I have tried to buy a chicken, and after half a dozen failures been forced to drive into the nearest town and there buy one at only just a little over London prices. I have made the same attempt for vegetables, and after a tour of the farms come sadly from the grocer with Danish butter. I have searched the district for logs to burn, and finally been told that if I will tramp a mile or two to Thorney Island, Mr. Gain may have some, as he is a marine store dealer—this in a country thickly covered with the woods that once made a hundred forges roar to heaven! I talk ironically of bringing down a hamper of London produce next time I come.

But I am not reasonable; for what right have I to expect natural blessings when I am treating nature unnaturally? If I lived in the country as I was meant to live, I should be able to get all the chickens, vegetables, butter and logs I wanted. The countryside still caters for a settled population. It is not its fault that beyond that settled population it has one which flickers and flows. It is, no doubt, my fault that I belong to that population, that instead of growing up in it naturally from roots cast deep in its own soil I erupt into it spasmodically from a metropolitan volcano.

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It is, of course, a truism that modern life, the life of the first quarter of the twentieth century, has changed the countryside. Yet it is astonishing how little we realize it. We still, many of us, talk of the country as it used to be rather than as it is. We still talk of it as a lurking-place of the primitive and unsophisticated; we still imagine that a life is lived there and that an outlook persists there totally different from the outlook and life of towns. Reviewers of country novels still consider "stark" and "elemental" appropriate adjectives, however blameless the authors may be in this respect. Editors still ask for articles on the contrast of sophisticated town life with the simplicity and primitiveness of the country.

Indeed, it is sometimes difficult for the country novelist to preserve his honesty. He knows that his public demands "elemental" characters, whereas truth compels him to say that the "elemental" seldom survives the elementary school. He knows that his public likes his characters to talk in an uncouth dialect, whereas he hears them talk (unless they are very old) in the careful English of those who are striving to talk like everybody else. His farmers must still ride in gigs, though he sees them more often in Fords, and he may not mention petrol-pumps, though he sees them nearly as often as trees.

I am, of course, speaking for the home-country novelist (in other words, for myself), though I feel that probably my remarks apply to the Devonshire novelist and the Cornish novelist and the Yorkshire novelist, and, indeed, the novelist of any part of the world which London, or Manchester or Leeds or Liverpool, considers worth visiting. The only parts of England which possibly may retain their ancient qualities are those parts with-

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out any remarkable gifts of picturesqueness to reward the predatory visitor. Certain parts of Somerset, certain parts of East Anglia may have been able still to keep inviolate, but for the rest —our great towns, like volcanoes, erupt a shower of small cinders over the countryside.

I do not write this in a grudging spirit. On the contrary, I think my view is on the whole more “bonhomous” than that of many others who are facing the facts. If I do not pretend that the country is unchanged, neither do I pretend that it ought to have remained unchanged. I am pleased that the town-dweller should extend his recreations beyond their moderate zone of thirty years ago. I am pleased that the edges of our great towns should crumble and scatter over the fields, so that much of London sleeps at Guildford and East Grinstead, much of Cheltenham at Painswick, and Hastings at Battle.

All I wish is that more of these strangers had been lovers. If I could feel sure that every stockbroker sleeping in a villa at East Grinstead has happier slumbers there than he would have in Belsize Park; that every clerk sleeping in a bungalow on the North Trade road at Battle is sleeping more sweetly than he could ever have slept in Hastings, then I should deplore neither the cottage nor the bungalow. What I resent is the uneasiness that creates a Belsize Park at East Grinstead, a Hastings at Battle. People drift into the country, not because they have fallen in love with it and know that henceforward they cannot be happy elsewhere, but because the rents are lower, the life is cheaper, or the doctor recommends the field-walk to the station. Instead of preferring the country to the town, they are definitely exiles, and, true to type, try to assuage their home-sickness by repro-

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ducing as much as possible around themselves the characteristics of the Fatherland. So that in Sussex (and others, no doubt, could say the same of other counties) one passes through little clouds and shadows of London and other big towns. One feels sometimes as one might feel if one talked to a bride who is loved not for herself but for her dowry. If a man loves Ashdown Forest enough to transport his entire family and their dinner there in his two-seater, surely he might love Ashdown Forest enough to leave it unmarred by its hospitality! But many times he does not. At best he whitens a yard or two of it with waste-paper, at worst he blackens a mile or two of it with casual fire.

But again, I would not pretend to grudge all the suburbani- ties that these exiles bring with them. I do not shudder at the wireless aerial in the cottage garden. I merely note that it is unsightly and wonder if its unsightliness is inevitable. The same applies to the petrol-pump, to the cinema, to the bungalow, indeed, to all the common objects of our modern countryside. It is not their existence that one deplores, but their mode of existence. Could not that mode be changed? I am ignorant of the mechanism of wireless, but I gather it is not indissolubly united to an erection like a giant's clothes-line. The quality of the petrol is not affected by the colour of the pump—a delicate, grey-green pump, melting unobtrusively into the landscape, would express as pure a juice as the scarlet and orange monstrosities that leap at us out of the hedgerow. (But here I know I shall be told that the passing motorist, passing at fifty miles an hour, cannot see anything that melts into the landscape, since that landscape is already for him nothing but a smear upon the windscreen. He requires to be hit on the eyeball by anything he is meant to see,

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such as a petrol-pump, or Ye Olde Cottage Tea Rooms. To which I reply that no intelligent motorist travels without a spare tin of petrol, enough to carry him to the next town should his tank become empty on the way; that the hedge petrol-station is only for fools with no spare tins, and though the number of these may well be beyond human calculation it cannot be enough to warrant so many atrocities to the mile.)

The same remarks apply to the cinema and the bungalow. Their ugliness is accidental, not inevitable. Indeed, they owe their tragic appearance to the fact that they are meant to be attractive. No base utilitarianism binds them to a mean shape. They are sacrificed not to usefulness, but to false ideas of beauty. Their common curse is decoration—a decoration which must necessarily be cheap, and involves additional economies in structure. After all, the shape of a barn (eminently suited to cinema) and the shape of a one-story cottage (the original bungalow) are shapes indigenous to the countryside, and we see daily from original examples how beautiful these can be. The trouble is that the builders of bungalows and cinemas will not follow the country patterns—the bungalow and the cinema traditions are metropolitan, rococo and hideous, and metropolitan rococo and hideous they stand among green fields or in sixteenth-century streets.

This consideration brings us face to face with another, too vast for more than statement here, for it is no less than a consideration of beauty itself. We have to keep in mind that, generally speaking, the builders of the cinema and the bungalow, even the perpetrators of the petrol-pumps, think that they have created objects not only useful and profitable, but beautiful.

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They definitely prefer their lurid ornamentation and colouring to more sober designs. A quietly built cottage of stone and weathered tiles is to them not only infinitely more expensive to build, but infinitely less entrancing to look at. The majority of these homes (I am concentrating on the bungalow illustration) are built by simple-minded people of restricted means, indeed, in many cases by the country-folk themselves. Their idea is brightness and economy. They like a gay pink roof that makes the villagers of six miles away say: "Look, there, at Mr. Bourner's house. Doesn't it show up pretty against Flittergate's Wood?" They like, if they have a little money to spare, to "throw out a gable" or stick on the ornamental porch they thought so lovely when they saw it at Wandsworth. And if the artistic would condemn and deride them, let them consider this: it is largely their fault that people without funds or taste are building bungalows about the countryside—let them blame their own appetite for native houses, which they perversely inhabit, driving the original dwellers out to seek new homes, and, since they are not to be found, to build them.

The week-end, especially if he is the artistic or literary week-end, prefers an ancient cottage to a modern one. Landlords soon discover this, and also that the week-end will pay a heavier rent than the original tenant. Notices to quit are served, and the village blacksmith or shop-keeper or farm labourer has to find another home. There is nothing at all in the district, and either he must build for himself (which the small shop-keeper can just afford to do) or he must leave the neighbourhood where his work and interests lie. Sometimes the landlord will erect a cheap row of cottages or some flimsy bungalows, which are

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seldom, if ever, inhabited by the newcomers, but provide a refuge for the evicted natives. Often a disused army-hut, or an impossible shackment of tarred wood and corrugated iron will be erected in an allotment already worked by some displaced cottager.

In the village I know best, you go down the street past windows whence the Nottingham lace has departed, giving place to the mauve and orange cretonnes of the sophisticated. In spite of the pull of the town, which shares the responsibility for this situation with the call of the countryside, I know that there must be many a local family in need of a home—either lodging congestively with relatives, or else remotely in less sought-after cottages on the parish boundary. I know, too, that in time they will either give up the struggle and move into the nearest town, or else they will somehow collect the money to build a small bungalow or shack or army-hut, and another eyesore will be added to the district—ethically blameless, but artistically damnable.

Last time I entered the Favourite Village a cry of anguish broke from me. There in the inviolate fields of its approach was rising horribly a wooden framework. A heap of bricks beside it suggested the lurid hues that would flame under the oaks. My inquiries brought pretty much the answer that I expected. I was told that “Mrs. Ades had had to leave her house and was building another up by the Wood.” I could say no more. I could hardly expect Mrs. Ades to call in Mr. Williams-Ellis to help her in designing the harmonies of her new abode. She will naturally build it as cheaply as possible—mostly out of wood and corrugated iron; she will paint it a bright colour and think it infinitely more attractive than her cottage which “the artists” have bought over her head; and, flimsy as it looks, it will be

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warmer and drier than her old home, which in winter-time assumes, as “the artists” will doubtless discover, the characteristics of an inhabited sponge.

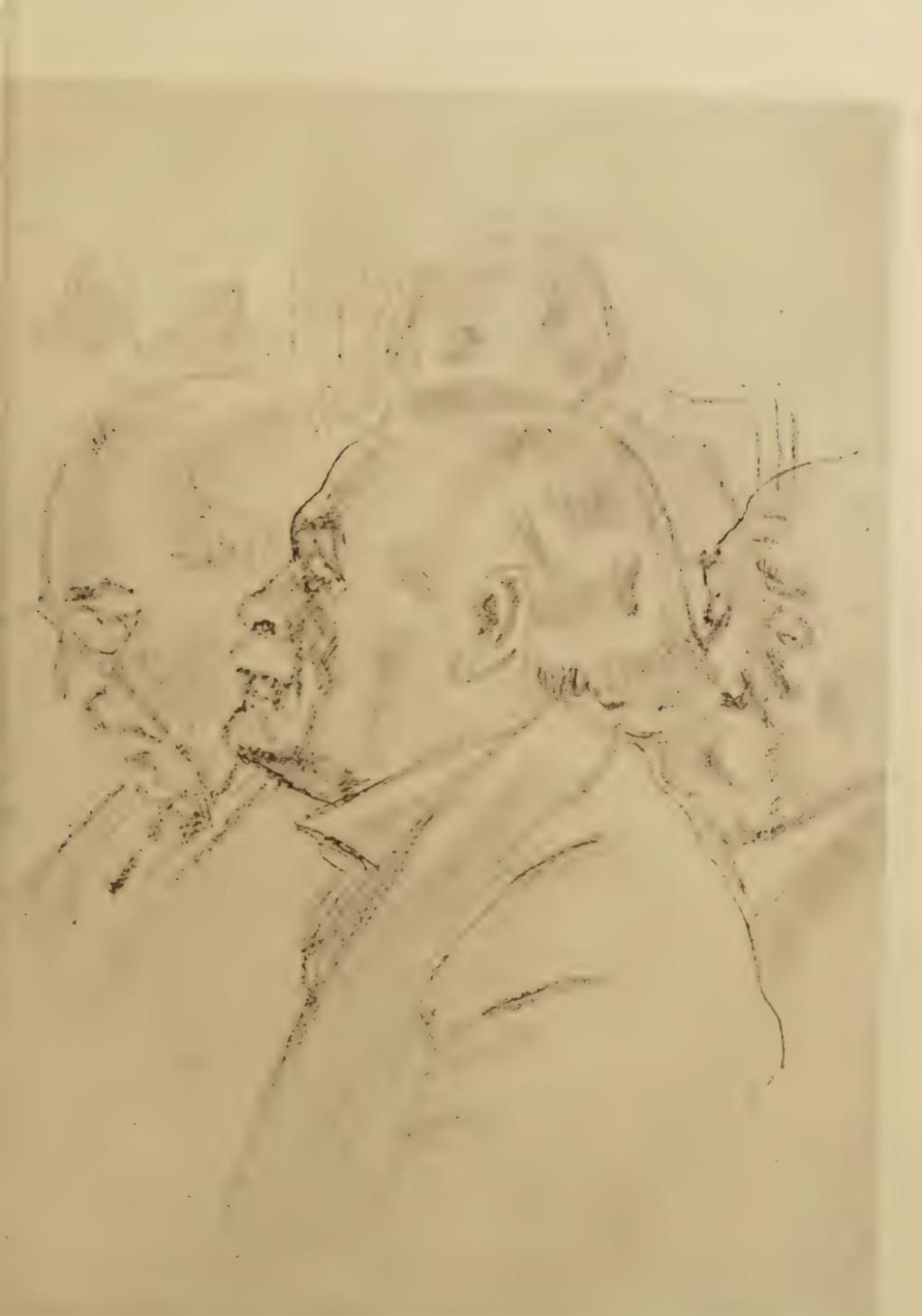
Again, I repeat, I am blaming nobody, but I think it only just that “the artists” should realize that they, rather than the Philistines, are to blame for the spoiling of our countryside. It suffers in their case from an excess rather than a lack of love. They would not dream of leaving waste-paper in the fields, or of building gaudily and shoddily; on the contrary, so deeply do they love the beauty which is appropriate that their homes must be found rooted as it were in the soil, a part of the natural growth. With the artist’s tendency to idealize abstractions and to ignore the concrete perversities of human beings, they forget all about those whom they displace—and lo! at their very door rises their judgment, in composite tiling and corrugated iron.

A great deal has been said in favour of the week-end. He may turn out the native, driving him away altogether, or else compelling him to accept the undignified position of a squatter on his own territories; but, it is said, the week-end as a rule improves the general standard of living—he spends more money in a week-end than the native would spend in a week, and he displays ideals of order and beauty in his house and garden. All this is true, and there really cannot be any sound objection to him if, in the first place, the population is not unduly shifted, and if, in the second, he takes his proper share in the amenities of village life. But the trouble is that he so seldom fulfils either of these conditions. His coming involves the going of others more entitled to the soil, and generally, quite as much as the other type of invader, he lives in the midst of his own little London, indiffer-

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ent to the local life, indeed quite unable to understand it. The æsthetic week-enders is like other townies in that he generally fails to realize that the real country-dweller, far from being a primitive creature in any Chelsea sense of the word, is a very mass of conventions, and more easily shocked and antagonized than any supposed suburbanite. I have again and again met cases in which quite excellent people have been hated for conduct they deemed highly appropriate to the surroundings. In certain far-flung neighbourhoods, such as Cornwall or the Channel Islands, this hatred has become so consolidated as to mean, in course of time, the inevitable flight of the stranger. In Sussex we have learned to dissemble. We are so near London that we have grown used to our invasion, and are ourselves sufficiently steeped in town ways to know how to profit by it.

All these changes that we deplore have brought a quite new kind of prosperity to our countryside. Our farms are still under the weather—year by year our acreage of hops and grain grows less—but the farmer can live, because he has let his house at a substantial rent to “foreigners,” and sold his more unprofitable fields as “valuable building sites.” The cottager finds that the motorist—otherwise a danger and a curse—readily spends money on meals, fruit, flowers, and “local” pottery. The inn struggles out of the gloom into which the railways had plunged it and once more becomes the gallant “ordinary,” with meals for man and car—“ye olde coffee room” where beef and mutton can be eaten under manufactured rafters, and petrol-pumps-all of-a-row to add their many-coloured florescence to the gaiety with which advertisements of tyres and “antiques” have already clothed ancient walls.



*Sir William Orpen, R. A.*



## SUSSEX REVISITED

We may not like it, but this we have made it, and the lover of the country must bear the blame along with the man who cares nothing for it, and seeks its hospitality only for health or economy's sake. Perhaps in far-off years to come history will repeat itself. Travel by air will make the motorist as scarce as the railways made the post-chaise. We will calculate in broader miles-ages and find Sussex and the home-counties too near London for residence.

Then, perhaps, the road will be empty, the inn unfrequented, the cottager poor and the farmer single-minded, as once again the old tale is told.

## V. SACKVILLE-WEST

### BLACK TARN

THE road ends with the hills.  
No track continues the fair and easy way  
That leads in safety beside the valley lake,  
Skirting the lake, the lake of candid waters  
Sleek among rising fells. It is a valley  
Veined by one road, one smooth and certain road,  
Walled on the fell-side, walled against the boulders,  
The rough fell-side, where few penurious sheep,  
Find a scrimp pasture, stray, crop, wander;  
A road whence the traveller may scan the valley,  
Seeing the lake, the prospect north and south,  
The foot of the fells; and, lifting up his eyes,  
Their heads, mist-dwelling;  
He may explore the ferns, the little lichens,  
The tiny life at fell's foot, peaty pools,  
Learning their detail, finding out their habit;  
This, and the general prospect of the valley,  
Lie and proportion of the fells, sky, waters,  
All from the road. But the road ends with the hills.

At the valley's head the road ends, making no curve  
To return whence it came, but, bluntly barred,

## BLACK TARN

Stops with the slope. The road's crisp gravel  
Softens to turf, to swamps of spongy peat,  
Boulders flung down in anger, brown streams poured  
From inaccessible sources. The dull brute hills  
Mount sullen, trackless; who would climb, must climb  
Finding a way; steps tentative,  
Thoughtful, and irrelated, steps of doubt,  
Sometimes of exultation. Now see the lake  
With its companion road, safe in the valley,  
That bird's-eye, easy conquest. Left below  
That known, seen, travelled region. Sagging clouds  
Veil the high hills, raze the peaks level,  
Wimple in white the hidden tors, the final  
Pricking of height towards sky; still through the mist  
Each conquered patch spreads visible, unrolls  
Its footing of turf or stone.  
Faith knows the shrouded peaks, their composition,  
Granite and shale, their sundered rock  
Like an axe's cleavage, wedge of scars.  
Faith knows they wait there, may be scaled.  
But few climb higher than these middle reaches,  
Difficult, wild enough; slopes to be won  
Nor wholly relinquished, even when steps return  
To the easy lowland, to the calm lake's shore,  
For they abide in the mind, as a value held,  
A gain achieved.

Most certainly I remember

A lonely tarn in the hills, a pool in a crater,  
Lustrous as armour, wet rocks, and still, round pool.

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Lustrous, but with a sheen not taken from heaven,  
Not with a light as lit the lake below  
In the open valley, frank and susceptible.  
Receiving and giving back; but inward, sullen,  
In the crater's cup, as drawing out  
Some dark effulgence from subterranean depths,  
Self-won, self-suffered. Stones I threw  
Sank, forced the surface to a ripple,  
But like a plummet dropped into earth's bowels  
Were swallowed, and the satanic darkness closed  
As though no wound had been.

I have seen Black Tarn,  
Shivered it for an instant, been afraid,  
Looked into its waters, seen there my own image  
As an upturned mask that floated  
Just under the surface, within reach, beyond reach.  
There are tarns among hills, for all who climb the hills,  
Tarns suddenly stumbled on, sudden points of meaning  
Among the rough negative hills, reward  
Precious and fearful, leaving a discontent  
With the lake in the valley, and the road beside the lake,  
And the dwellings of men, the safety, and the ease.

## SAPPER

# THE THREE NUMBERS

HERE is no doubt whatever that had it been necessary for Ronald Standish to earn a livelihood, he could have made big money as a private detective. And yet it would have been difficult to imagine anyone whose appearance suggested the fact less. Of medium height, he was inclined to be thick-set. His face was ruddy, with a short, closely-clipped moustache—and in his eyes there shone a perpetual twinkle. In fact, most people, on first meeting him, took him for an Army Officer. He was a first-class man to hounds, and an excellent shot; a cricketer who might easily have become first class had he devoted enough time to it, and a scratch golfer. And last, but not least, he was a man of very great personal strength without a nerve in his body.

Moreover, his memory was astounding. There are few of us, I venture to think, who have long left school, who would remember that formic acid might be used in the preparation of carbon monoxide. And yet it was precisely that piece of knowledge that enabled Ronald to solve the terrible mystery at Stavely Grange, a case of his I have already recorded.

And though no such recondite information was necessary in the affair I am about to put down, yet it illustrated very fully his favourite dictum:

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

"A fact pointing in a certain direction is just a fact: two pointing in the same direction become a coincidence: three—and you begin to get into the regions of certainty. But you must be very sure of your facts."

It was early in the afternoon on a day in September that we left my club after lunch and strolled towards his rooms. He had just returned from a shoot in Scotland: I was tied by the heels in London on business.

"We might go up to Lord's for an hour or two," he remarked, as we climbed the stairs to his rooms. "Hullo! what's this?"

Stuck half-way into the letter-box was a visiting-card. He glanced at it; then with a shrug of his shoulders handed it to me.

"Don't know the gentleman," he said. "Do you?"

"No," I answered. "Never heard of him."

The card bore the name of Sir Richard Burton. His address was Knowle Manor, Pangbourne: his club the Panthaeum. On the back of it in pencil was scribbled the following sentence: "Found you out; will return at 2.45. R. B."

Ronald sat down at his desk and picked up a copy of *Who's Who*. "Burton, Sir Richard," he read. "Second Baronet. K. C. M. G. Created in 1912. Born 1869. Travelled extensively in South America. Author of several books. *Two Years on the Amazon*, etc. Made J. P. in 1924. Recreations, Shooting and Fishing."

The bell rang, and Ronald left the room.

"Come in, Sir Richard," he cried. "Sorry I was out when you came. This is a great pal of mine—Tom Manvers."

Sir Richard proved to be a well-built man of average height. His hair was plentifully flecked with grey, but his face looked younger than his years. His eyes were keen and penetrating, and

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as he flashed a quick look from one to the other of us it struck me that he was essentially a man of action, who was quite capable of looking after himself in any emergency.

He nodded to me, and put his hat on the table.

"I shan't keep you long, Mr. Standish," he said, "but if you can spare me a few minutes I'd be very much obliged."

"Go ahead, Sir Richard," said Ronald, "I can't promise you results, but I can promise to do my best."

"Good," said the other curtly. "That's the sort of talk I like. To get on with it, it was in 1919 that I bought my house outside Pangbourne."

"Is it a big house, Sir Richard?"

"Medium sized. Amply big enough for me. I am not married, and I live there with my nephew, who is also my secretary."

He paused, and gave a short laugh.

"Pon my soul, Mr. Standish, the whole thing seems so damned foolish here in your flat, in broad daylight, that I almost regret having wasted your time."

"Doesn't matter, Sir Richard," said Ronald. "Now you are here, you'd better get it off your chest."

"Well, about a month ago," continued the other, "John—that's my nephew—came to me in a state of considerable surprise. He had an open letter in his hand—he deals with all my mail—and he put it down on the desk in front of me."

"This beats me, Uncle Dick," he said. "Is it a practical joke?"

"I looked at the envelope; there it is, Mr. Standish—you can see it for yourself. Addressed to me in sprawling block capitals; handwriting illiterate; postmark Reading. Now—open it and see what was inside."

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I looked over Ronald's shoulder as he took out the enclosure. It consisted of half a sheet of paper with the number 18 scrawled on it. But the amazing thing was the manner of the scrawling. It was in a sort of discoloured brown ink, and had been done with some blunt instrument, so that the figure "1" was over a quarter of an inch thick and about three inches long.

"Was this all?" said Ronald, studying it.

"Absolutely all," answered the other.

And then Ronald suddenly stared at the paper intently.

"Have you had this examined under a microscope?" he asked. "Because, Sir Richard, unless I am much mistaken this is not ink. It is blood."

"Blood!" I cried in amazement; but Sir Richard only smiled his satisfaction.

"Good, Standish, good!" he cried. "I'm glad you spotted that. You're right—it is blood. And it is not human blood. The man who made the examination is prepared to swear that. In his opinion it is the blood of some bird, though what bird he is quite unable to say."

"How very extraordinary!" said Ronald. "Has any further development taken place?"

"Most certainly," answered the other. "About a fortnight ago a precisely similar letter arrived. There it is—same writing, same postmark. But with one big difference, which you will see when you open it. Instead of the number 18 it is 9."

"Written with the same instrument," said Ronald thoughtfully, "and again in blood."

"This morning," continued Sir Richard, "came the third. Once more the same writing, and the same postmark. Once more

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a big difference. In this morning's effusion the number is 27. There it is: see for yourself."

In silence we stared at the three sheets of paper, whilst Sir Richard leaned back in his chair and lit a cigar.

"What do you make of it, Standish? Is it a practical joke?"

Ronald stared at him thoughtfully.

"Frankly, Sir Richard, absolutely nothing—at the moment. There is no use in my pretending that I do. It may be some stupid practical joke; it may be something very much more serious. What is it?"

Sir Richard, who was standing by the window, had given a sudden exclamation.

"Well, I'm blest," he said. "I could have sworn that was my nephew on the other side of the street."

"Is there any particular reason why it shouldn't have been?" said Ronald.

"None, really. Except that I left him to do some work for me. And anyway," he added with a laugh, "I don't think it can have been. The man I saw seems to have gone to ground in a religious bookshop, which rules John out. Well, Standish—what's your suggestion?"

"Leave them with me, Sir Richard. I'll see what I can do. I may have a brain-storm, or I might be able to find out something in Reading. Though on the data you've given me up to now I don't hold out much hope."

Sir Richard picked up his stick and gloves, disclosing as he did so a book which had been lying underneath them.

"Hullo!" said Ronald quietly, "that's interesting."

"What is?"

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"The title of your book, *Pheasant Rearing*. Do you preserve, Sir Richard?"

"I do, though not on a very large scale."

"A point of possible significance. The figures are written in bird's blood. Have you by any chance sacked a keeper lately?"

Sir Richard shook his head.

"No, I haven't. Yet another blind alley, I'm afraid. Well, Standish"—he held out his hand—"I'll leave the effusions with you. If you think of anything, let me know. And if I get another I will send it to you."

With a nod to me he went out, and Ronald lit a cigarette.

"18, and 9, and 27," he mused. "Is there any significance in the fact that they are all multiples of 9? Is there any significance in the order in which they were sent? If we assume that it is pheasant's blood, is there any significance in that? Can it be that these figures are the records of some poacher, who out of bravado has sent the size of his bag to Sir Richard, and being an illiterate man, probably with a penchant for the films, has chosen this sensational sort of ink?"

"By Jove! Ronald," I said, "that's about the most likely theory you've put forward yet."

"Most likely!" he laughed. "It's the only one. And it's sheer guess-work. It is true that it does account for the facts as we know them: it is just as true that half a dozen others would do so equally well."

He rose and stretched himself.

"But there's one thing I feel in my bones, Tom. Those numbers have some significance, though what it is I don't know. They are

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not an utterly pointless practical joke: of that I am convinced. Let's go to Lord's."

And though the match was a good one, I found my attention continually wandering to Sir Richard Burton's strange story. What possible meaning could those numbers possess? Was it a warning, a threat, or what? And finally I came to the conclusion that Ronald's theory about the poacher was the correct one, though during the days that followed I could see that he was not satisfied with it.

"I can't help feeling," he said two or three times, "that we're not being very clever about it, Tom. There's something behind it."

And yet though he blamed himself bitterly afterwards, I cannot think that he had any cause to do so. It is easy to be wise after the event, and to replay the hand when all the cards are on the table. And I maintain that in this case he didn't have a chance. If there are those who think otherwise they are entitled to their opinion. All I would ask them is to remember the sole data in our possession on the Monday morning when we saw the news in the paper.

Ronald came bursting into my room before I had started breakfast.

"Seen the news, Tom?" he said curtly.

He pointed to a short paragraph in the paper.

"Sir Richard Burton, the eminent South American explorer, was brutally murdered last night at Knowle Manor, his house near Pangbourne."

"Good Lord!" I muttered. "Poor old chap."

"Put me down as a triple-distilled damned fool, Tom," he

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cried. "Monday, the 19th of September. Yesterday was the 18th. The 18th day, Tom, of the ninth month of the year 1927. Or for brevity 18-9-27. We've got the significance of the three numbers at last. I've already been rung up by Inspector Jobson of the Berkshire Police to go down there with the three sheets of paper."

"But how did he know you'd got them?" I said.

"Presumably the nephew knew his uncle had come to me. Would you care to come?"

"You bet!" I said.

And the only remark he made in the car on the way down was typical.

"Sir Richard came to me and I've let him down. I'm going to find out who did it if it takes me the next five years."

Knowle Manor proved to be a medium-sized house of that distinctive type which is met with only in England. A house with rambling wings, and windows that opened right down to the ground. A stout, shortish man was standing by the front door as we drove up, and at his side was a tall fair man of about thirty.

"Mr. Standish?" said the short one curtly, looking from one to the other of us.

"I'm Standish," said Ronald. "This is Mr. Manvers."

"I am Inspector Jobson," said the other. "And this is Sir John Burton."

"You've heard the ghastly news. Mr. Standish?"

"I read the brief announcement in the paper," said Ronald gravely. "May I express my sincere sympathy with you?"

"Sir Richard Burton, I am given to understand, consulted you a little while ago about some strange communications that he had received?"

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"That is so," said Ronald, "Here they are."

The Inspector took the papers, and gave a little grunt of satisfaction.

"The last possible doubt removed, Sir John. Look!"

"I feared as much," said the other.

"Pendlestone," called out the Inspector, and a policeman came towards him and saluted. "Detain Mark Fuller at once on suspicion of murdering Sir Richard Burton. Caution him in the usual way."

The policeman moved off down the drive, and the Inspector turned to us, rubbing his hands.

"Promptitude, Mr. Standish: quickness of action—that is my motto. A pity, if I may say so, that Sir Richard should have wasted—er—should have bothered to consult you. The proper people to come to with things of this sort are the police. The figures are, of course, quite meaningless, but, at the same time—"

He shrugged his shoulders expressively: enough had been said to put us in our place.

"Certainly," said Ronald kindly. "Yesterday was the 18th of September, 1927. September is the ninth month. 18-9-27."

"By Jove! Mr. Standish," cried Sir John admiringly, "that's deuced quick of you."

"I admit, Sir John," said Ronald, "to my everlasting regret, that I did not spot it before. Now, as I say, it is blatantly obvious—but now it is too late."

"Great Scott! Jobson," said Sir John, "it's yet another bit of proof, if more were needed. I remember distinctly that last year the flower show was held on the 17th of September. And it

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was the day after that that Fuller was up in front of my uncle. Yesterday was the anniversary of his sentence. You can verify it, of course, but I'm certain I'm right."

"Would it be indiscreet, Inspector, since we have come down here, to ask you to satisfy our curiosity?" said Ronald.

"Certainly, Mr. Standish, if Sir John has no objection."

"I have none whatever," said Sir John. "You'll forgive me if I don't stay myself."

He nodded and strolled off in the direction of the stables.

"If you will come this way, gentlemen," said the Inspector, "I will reconstruct the whole crime for you." He stepped through the open windows and we followed him. "Now, this is the room in which the murder was committed—the late Sir Richard's study."

It was a handsome oak-panelled room, with a big desk so placed in the middle of it that the writer had his left side to the light and did not face it. Several good heads adorned the walls, and the whole of one side of the room was taken up with bookshelves. In short, exactly the type of room which one would have expected Sir Richard to have as his own.

"Last night," began the Inspector, "Sir Richard came in here after dinner as was his custom. Usually his nephew came with him, but unfortunately on this occasion he did not. He had just obtained a new gramophone, and so he went to his own room at the other end of the house. At about ten o'clock his door was burst open by the butler, who was in a terrible state of agitation. The man had apparently come in here to see if Sir Richard wanted anything, and had found the unfortunate gentleman dead at his desk with his head almost blown to pieces. It was a

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ghastly wound, Mr. Standish. Blood was all over the desk; a half-finished letter was in front of him; his pen was still clutched in his hand. Sir John came rushing down and at once rang me up and the doctor. We arrived together at half-past ten, and Doctor Jarvis made his examination. He placed the time of death at about half-past nine, and then we proceeded to search for the bullet. It had passed clean through the head, making a bad wound, as you will understand, on the side from which it came out. We found it lightly embedded in the wall. Here it is."

He handed it to Ronald, who examined it carefully.

"About .260, I should say," he said. "High velocity rifle. A dangerous weapon. Go on, Inspector."

"To make it clearer to you, I must now digress," the Inspector continued. "About a quarter of a mile away from here, on the borders of the estate, is the cottage of a man called Mark Fuller. A morose, queer-tempered fellow living by himself, who makes a bare livelihood by market gardening. Officially, that is: unofficially he adds to it by poaching. And a year ago he was caught red-handed and came up before the bench when Sir Richard was chairman. Well, it is not for me to criticize, but they gave him a pretty stiff sentence—I'd almost go so far as to say a vindictive one. You know what these landowners are when it comes to a question of poaching. At any rate, since this murder was committed it has come to my ears that on two or three occasions Fuller has used some very threatening language about Sir Richard.

"However, to carry on in the proper sequence. It appears that Sir John has for a few months past been giving Fuller a helping hand. He hinted to me that on one or two things he did

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not see eye to eye with his uncle, particularly over the punishment that the bench had inflicted. And he has made a point of buying a certain amount of vegetables and flowers from Fuller. Strange, isn't it, how quite ordinary actions may prove links in the chain that brings a man to the gallows?"

"Go on, Inspector."

I glanced at Ronald, and I noticed that he had a puzzled frown on his face. He was staring out of the window, and tapping the stem of his pipe against his teeth, a sure sign that something was worrying him.

The Inspector cleared his throat portentously.

"He treated Fuller as an ordinary tradesman, obtaining bills from him in the usual way. You will appreciate the relevance of that point later. Yesterday afternoon he sent for Fuller to come up here, as he wanted to talk to him. He interviewed him in the gunroom. Sir Richard, as you may know, was a noted shot; and he has a large collection of guns and rifles. Fuller was very interested in them, and after they had finished their talk Sir John explained to him the various types of weapon. Then he was called away and the interview ended. He did not go back into the gunroom, and he thought no more about the matter until the tragedy. Even then it was not until some time after I arrived that the possibility entered his mind.

"He said, 'Good Lord! Jobson, I may be wrong, I hope I am. Come with me and we'll see.'

"We went into the gunroom and he switched on the light.

"'The devil!' he said, 'there's a stalking-rifle missing.'

"And it was then he told me about the interview with Fuller yesterday afternoon. Naturally, I am too old a stager not to

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realize that one isolated fact like that is no proof: any number of people had access to the gunroom. But we had definitely advanced in our investigation. We knew that Mark Fuller had had the chance of taking the rifle: we knew that the rifle had gone.

"And now comes one of those small but absolutely damning bits of evidence that occasionally one stumbles on. You will remember that I told you that Sir John was in the habit of obtaining bills from this man Fuller for the stuff he bought. By a sheer piece of luck he happened to have one in his pocket. Here it is."

He handed a half-sheet of paper to Ronald.

	s.	d.
8 Coliflowers	6	8
2 lbs. Potaters		5
1 lb. Onions		3
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	7	4
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Paid with thanks

M. Fuller

August 2nd

For a long time Ronald stared at the paper; then he handed it back.

"Very interesting, Inspector. Go on!"

"You see the utterly conclusive nature of the clue? You see why, the instant I saw the numbers Sir Richard had given you, I gave orders for Fuller's arrest."

Ronald smiled slightly.

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"You allude to the very characteristic 8, I presume. Also to the fact that the paper is the same for the bill and for the numbers."

"You are quick, Mr. Standish."

"I take it, then, that your theory is as follows," said Ronald. "The hand that wrote the bill also wrote the numbers. We know Fuller wrote the bill, therefore he wrote the numbers. The numbers contained a threat in the form of a date. On that date Sir Richard was murdered with a shot from a stalking-rifle. On that date also Fuller had the opportunity of stealing such a weapon, and such a weapon did disappear. Therefore, Fuller shot Sir Richard."

"Is there a flaw, Mr. Standish?" cried the Inspector triumphantly. "And, incidentally, you haven't added the subsidiary points that the numbers were written in the blood of a bird; that a year ago Fuller was run in for poaching; that it is known that he has uttered threats against Sir Richard; and finally that at the time of the murder we have only his word for it that he was in his cottage."

A shadow fell across the floor: Sir John was standing in the window.

"Poor old chap," he said. "By George! Mr. Standish, when I think of all I've done for that swine, Fuller, I feel I'd like to have the hanging of him myself."

"I quite understand your feelings," said Ronald quietly. "And since it hasn't been mentioned, I suppose no shot was heard? By the way, was Sir Richard at all deaf?"

"Far from it," said his nephew in surprise. "His hearing was exceptionally good. But there is one point that has struck me: possibly it has occurred to you also. If your theory, Mr. Standish,

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is correct: if those numbers represent a date, how did Fuller know that on that actual date he would have an opportunity of murdering my uncle?"

"How, indeed?" said Standish. "It's your turn to be quick now, Sir John. It is possible, of course, that when he sent those numbers his only idea was to carry out a foolish sort of threat. And then by a strange coincidence he found the means at his disposal to turn a threat into reality."

"I could kill myself for having shown him those guns," said Sir John savagely. "But the devil seemed so interested."

"You mustn't blame yourself," said Ronald gravely. "No one could possibly have foreseen. Of course, no trace has been found of the missing rifle?"

"None," said the Inspector. "More than likely he threw it into the Thames. And if so, there never will be any trace of it. Well, gentlemen, I must be getting back. Your evidence will be required, Mr. Standish: I will let you know in due course."

He went out through the window, and it was not until the sound of his footsteps had died away on the gravel drive that Sir John spoke.

"I don't know if I can offer either of you anything," he said. "If not, perhaps you will excuse me. I fear there is nothing more we can do, except bring that swine to justice."

"Quite," said Ronald. "Well, good-bye, Sir John. We'll be getting back. Once again my sincere sympathy."

I followed him through the window, and we crossed the drive.

"The place must surely be looking its very best," said Ronald, and undoubtedly it was a charming property. In front of us the

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ground dropped away to a small lake fringed with trees that had already assumed their autumnal colouring. "Really delightful."

With his head thrown back, Ronald was studying the country through half-closed eyes as I joined him.

"Look there!"

He pointed with his left hand, and at the same time gripped my arm with his right in a way there was no mistaking. When he wanted, his grip was rather like a steel vice.

"Stay here," he muttered urgently. "Exquisite," he said aloud. "Exquisite. Well, we must be going. Damn! I've left my tobacco pouch indoors."

He turned and left me, and true to his orders I stood where I was until he hailed me again.

"Come on. Tom! Just get to town in time for lunch."

"A pretty clear case," I said, as we turned into the main road. He grunted thoughtfully.

"What was the great idea about the tobacco pouch?" I continued.

"A little question of line of sight," was his surprising answer. "Dash it! Tom, if only Sir Richard had been deaf and this man Fuller had known how to spell cauliflower, I should be able to go off and play cricket to-morrow."

And not another word could I get out of him during the drive.

It was not until the following day that I saw him again. I went round to his rooms to find him staring moodily out of the window. The morning papers had all contained accounts of Fuller's arrest, and when I mentioned it to Ronald he nodded.

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"The worthy Jobson saw to that," he said. "I went down to Pangbourne again yesterday afternoon, Tom."

"Why didn't you tell me?" I cried.

"Nothing very interesting," he said. "I wanted to play that gramophone or, rather, hear it. And you can't—not from Sir Richard's study."

"Is the point important?" I asked.

"Vital," he said. "Absolutely vital. Tom, there's a missing link and I can't get it. A clever man may be a fool, but he's not a suicidal idiot."

"You don't think Fuller did it," I said.

"He had as much to do with it as we had," he answered. "But never have I realized more clearly the difference between knowing and proving."

"Then you know who did it?" I cried.

"A singularly dangerous man," he said grimly. "And a singularly clever man. And what is defeating me, as I said before, is how a clever man could commit an act of such suicidal idiocy. The stupidity is such that I am really beginning, in spite of everything, to wonder if I'm on the right hare. If you are told a man is a clever mathematician and you catch him making a mistake in the multiplication table, you're bound to think that something is wrong somewhere."

He was drumming with his fingers on the glass, and suddenly his hand fell to his side.

"Good Lord!" he said softly, "what a fool I am. Right under my nose the whole time. Damn it! I've been looking at it the whole morning."

Without his hat he dashed out of the room, and in amazement

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I watched him dart over the street into the bookshop opposite. He came back in about ten minutes with a small parcel, and at once picked up the telephone.

"Trunks, please. I want Pangbourne, Knowle Manor: I don't know the number. We may get him, Tom," he said as he hung up the receiver, "but we've got to move darned warily. And our only hope is to make him give himself away."

The bell jangled.

"Hullo! Is that you, Sir John? It is Standish speaking. Look here, the most extraordinary piece of corroborative evidence about Fuller has come to my ears. Could you possibly come up at once? It's very urgent. Good! You will."

He rang off and turned to me.

"Now, Tom—no time to lose. Ring up the Yard while I adjust this."

"But, good Lord! man," I almost shouted, "you can't mean that it was Sir John. Why, he was playing the gramophone the whole time."

"The gramophone was playing the whole time," he said quietly. "And that's a very different matter when it happens to be one of those new machines that plays twelve records on end."

He undid the parcel, and produced a small cylindrical object of a type I had never seen before. Then he took down one of his rifles and got to work.

"The Knebworth silencer," he explained.

"I don't quite understand," I said.

"It suddenly came to me as I was looking out of the window. Do you remember the day Sir Richard was here, he said he saw

## THE THREE NUMBERS

his nephew, as he thought, going into the religious bookshop. He did, but he didn't stop there. The agency for this silencer is on the floor above: I've just been over there. And he bought one, but not in his own name: the man spotted him at once from my description. It's the missing link, Tom: the one thing that has been puzzling me. And the devil of it is that even now, if he keeps his head, he may be able to get away with it."

"But what did he do it for?" I cried.

"Up to his eyes with moneylenders," said Ronald. "I found that out the afternoon we got back from Pangbourne. A very fine example, Tom, of a man being too clever. And yet he's been clever enough, unless we can trap him, to illustrate what I said to you a little while ago—the difference between knowing and proving. Ring up the Yard, like a good fellow. Get McIver, if possible—and you can both go to ground in my bedroom. I will interview Sir John alone."

So two hours later Inspector McIver and I sat in Ronald's bedroom, listening to the interview between him and Sir John.

"Sorry you'll have to wait a bit, Sir John," said Ronald. "The man hasn't rolled up yet, but he won't be long."

They talked on casually for a few minutes, and then through the keyhole I saw Ronald produce the rifle.

"What on earth is that attachment?" said Sir John, and into Ronald's eyes there came a momentary gleam of triumph.

"The Knebworth silencer," he said. "Never seen one?"

"Never even heard of it," he said. "How does it work?"

"The owner of the patent is just coming to explain it," said Ronald easily. "What's the matter, Sir John? Don't go. I said—don't go."

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His voice rang suddenly stern.

"Come in, Mr. Parker," and I heard the door open. "Do you know that man?"

"I certainly do," said a strange voice. "Mr. Martin, isn't it? You bought one of my silencers on the sixth of this month. So you did not go abroad, after all?"

"It's a lie," shouted Sir John.

"And is it a lie that you're up to your neck in debt, Sir John?" said Ronald quietly. "Is it a lie that you shot your uncle from almost point-blank range through the head, having established, as you thought, an alibi by means of a gramophone? You sent those numbers, Sir John: you—God! Stop him!"

But it was too late. As McIver and I dashed in, Sir John pitched forward on his face and lay still. And in the air there hung a faint smell of bitter almonds.

"What first put you on the scent, Ronald?" I asked, as a couple of hours later we sat down to dinner.

"The very thing that that bright specimen had thought would put us off it—the numbers. The habit of dating a letter that way—or shall I say, of thinking of a date that way—is essentially the habit of a business man, or at any rate an educated one. Fuller was very uneducated: he spelt potatoes and cauliflower wrong in his bill. Moreover, he dated it August 2nd—not 2-8-27. And so, though I was convinced the numbers did mean a date, I was equally convinced that no uneducated man had sent them. If that were so, the whole case against Fuller fell to the ground, and a very different aspect of affairs presented itself. Fuller was being made the scapegoat for someone else. The question was who—the bill pointed pretty unerringly there. Our worthy Job-

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son assumed that because the two eights were the same, therefore the same hand had written them. Which would have been sound if the date of the bill had been *after* the number was sent. But it was before. So there was no reason why the number should not be a copy, which, in fact, it was. But the crux of the whole thing was the lie of the ground, coupled with the fact that Sir Richard's hearing was good. When I made that excuse about my tobacco pouch, I sat down at the desk. And I couldn't even see you, owing to the slope of the ground. So that the man who shot Sir Richard must have been on the drive itself. Now, however quietly you walk on gravel you make a noise. And would Sir Richard have remained sitting at his desk if he'd looked up and seen Fuller in the light from the window? If he'd looked up and seen his nephew he would have thought nothing of it. And when he'd resumed his writing that blackguard shot him at leisure.

"The difficulty, as you see, was the sound of the shot. Whether a gramophone is playing or not, the sound of a shot travels on a quiet night. And it was not that that was defeating me. Because, whatever a man like Fuller might or might not have done, a man like Sir John would never have dared risk it. It would have been an act of suicidal folly from his point of view. A servant *might* have been outside the door and dashed in; somebody *might* have been in the grounds. I already was almost certain in my own mind that it was Sir. John, and I must admit I admired his cleverness in anticipating the obvious difficulty about the date coinciding with the opportunity, a difficulty to which he left me to supply the answer. But it was the noise of that darned shot that was the stumbling-block. Had he risked it, or was I all wrong? Everything pointed to him, and yet I wasn't sure.

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Then we had our bit of luck—the fact that Sir Richard had seen him enter that shop. But do you realize one thing, Tom? *If he had given his own name when he bought that silencer: if he had stated all along that the rifle which he said Fuller stole had been fitted with it, he wouldn't be dead now. And in the fullness of time an innocent man would have gone to the gallows."*

W. DE LA MARE  
THE IMAGE

**F**AINT sighings sounded, not of wind, amid  
That chasm'd waste of boulder and cactus flower,  
Primeval sand its sterile coverlid,  
Unclocked eternity its passing hour.

Nought breathed or stirred beneath its void of blue;  
Save when in far, faint, dying whisper strained  
Down the sheer steep, where not even lichen grew,  
Eroded dust, and, where it fell, remained.

Hewn in that virgin rock, nude 'gainst the skies,  
Loomed mighty Shape—of granite brow and breast,  
Its huge hands folded o'er unseeing eyes,  
Its lips and feet immovably at rest.

Where now the Wanderers who this image scored  
For age-long Idol here?—Death? Destiny? Fame?  
Mute, secret, dreadful, and by man adored;  
Yet not a mark in the dust to tell its name.

REGINALD BERKELEY

THE PRINCE CONSORT  
A STUDY FOR A LARGER CANVAS

CHARACTERS

'ENSHAW MR. LORIMER

BAXTER MADDISON RATU BENI MATANITOMBUA

MA'AFI LITIA WAILANGILALA, MRS. HAMILTON CARTER

Queen of Moturea HENRI

THE PRINCE CONSORT

[ SCENE ]

*The Palace of the Queen—a lofty thatched dwelling set among native huts with one or two wooden galvanized iron-roofed sheds among them, which, taken together with a largish wooden building wherein the chiefs meet in conference, and a small church built of hewn blocks of coral with a roof of thatch, constitute the precincts of the Court. The Settlement, with its largish native town, sprinkled with the storekeepers' bungalows and warehouses, lies to the south of the Palace, straggling along the shores of a reef-bound harbour. Beyond the Settlement, on the crest of a low hill, stands a considerable bungalow, surrounded by a cluster of outbuildings—the quarters of the British Resident: for Moturea, like*

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*the kingdom of Tonga and other island communities, is a British Protectorate. North of the Palace and, thus appropriately separated from the Residency by the whole width of the native township, lie the compounds of the Wesleyan Mission—a bungalow for the missionary, native houses for his catechists and assistants, a smaller bungalow for the schoolmaster, the school buildings, and a handsome church.*

*Three men are met together in the big anteroom of the Palace—a spacious, rather ferrety-eyed Cockney, who calls himself' Enshaw; Baxter Maddison, a heavy-featured American, florid, laconic, gnawing at the inevitable cigar; and a large-framed, fat islander, in whose blurred features the remains of a vigorous, finely drawn countenance can still be seen, and who still retains natural dignity and the habit of command. This is Ratu Beni Matanitombua, High Chief of Moturea, deposed from his throne in 1902 because of his attempt to assert sovereign independence, and succeeded on the throne by his younger brother, Malakai Na Ngio, father of the present Queen. After sixteen years' deportation in the Gilbert Islands, Ratu Beni, in the general political amnesty following the great European War, was permitted to return—the presumption being that he was now too old to do any harm, a not unreasonable supposition, seeing that he cannot have been born long after 1850, for he was kidnapped by "blackbirders" in 1868, and after two years' forced labour on a cotton plantation in Vanua Levu, took a vigorous part in the Fijian wars in the early 'seventies, and returned with a great reputation as a warrior to his own islands in 1884, in good time to establish an unquestioned ascendancy over his fellow-chiefs before he succeeded his father in 1890. Now, after a couple of years' political inactivity, he has unobtrusively established himself as unofficial leader of the chiefs, and, as such, a powerful adviser, and in some respects almost a dictator, of the policy of his niece the Queen.*

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*The room is sparsely furnished. A great high-backed chair—the gift of a long-departed whaling skipper to a former High Chief, a tremendous heavy hardwood affair, rather roughly knocked together by ships' carpenters, but now, from long usage and much oiling and rubbing, showing a fine patine on the wood—stands on a low mat-covered platform near the inner wall. This is the throne. There are one or two plain wickerwork armchairs for the use of European visitors. A small blue baize-covered table in one corner, with an earthenware waterbottle and a glass upon it, and a couple of plain office-chairs tucked in beside it, has been introduced in imitation of most British Government offices throughout the South Seas, and is intended for the use of the native scribes on official occasions, such as the Bose Vaka turanga, or Parliament of Chiefs. At the moment it is serving as the repository of the elbows of Baxter Maddison, as he sits at it, chewing his cigar and shifting his eyes from one to the other of his companions, as they speak. 'Enshaw, with the vulgarian's contempt for dark-skinned people, is lounging about with his hands in his pockets, and his straw hat on the back of his head. Ratu Beni fills a large wicker armchair, which creaks perilously under his bulk. His right leg is thrown across his left knee in an attitude he picked up from a former Resident. He is idly brushing at his bare feet and legs with a fly-whisk to keep insects away.*

'ENSHAW [*earnestly*]: Look, Beni, you go and get the Queen to come and 'ave a talk with us. Leave the other part to me. I'll see you're looked after. [*Silencing the Chief as he is about to reopen the question*]: Leave it to me, I tell you. You know Willie 'Enshaw, don't you?

RATU BENI: Yes, I know you. But—

'ENSHAW [*interrupting him*]: Well, leave it to me, I tell you.

## THE PRINCE CONSORT

RATU BENI [*giving in*]: All right. You my friend! [*Taking his arm and drawing him towards the inner door*]: Don't forget. You my friend!

'ENSHAW [*as the Chief goes*]: 'Aven't I always bin? [*Turning to Maddison when they are alone*]: An' I 'ave, too. Owes me a lot, Beni does. Quite a white man 'e is, for a Kanaka. Now listen to me, Maddison. You let me do the talkin'. You've got to know these people.

MADDISON: Boy, I knew how to deal with niggers when you were eating pap.

'ENSHAW: These ain't ordinary niggers. Don't run away with that idea. Course, they're not the equal of a white man, but they're—

MADDISON: Aw, shucks! One black bozo is pretty much the same as another. Treat 'em like the dirt they are, they'll blame soon get to know their master's voice. You can't show me anything on niggers.

'ENSHAW [*earnestly*]: Look 'ere, I'm not goin' to 'ave wot I've bin workin' years to get fixed all mucked up because you're too blooming conceited to be told wot's wot. We agreed in our partnership I was to 'andle the natives and you was to 'andle the finance, and if you're tryin' to go back on it now, it ain't fair. I'd sooner you took your money out, straight I would!

MADDISON [*irritably*]: There's no sense talking that way. All I want to know is—what's this fellow's graft?

'ENSHAW: Crikey—wot's 'is graft? 'E's pretty dam near the 'ole shootin'-match 'ere. This is the feller the British Government slung out in 1902 for stirring up trouble. Didn't 'arf 'ave a job of it, either. 'E was King, that's all, an' 'e was goin' to

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chase the white men out of the group and bag all their property. They only 'ad to call in a cruiser, and land about a million blue-jackets, before they quieted things down, and then they carted 'im away to one of them god-forsaken islands up north of the Gilberts, an' kep' 'im there till a few years ago.

MADDISON: How does that give him a graft here now? This Queen's the guy we wanna fix.

'ENSHAW: Ain't you brilliant! But I've got 'er, see? Fixed that two years ago when she was at Fiji.

MADDISON: How the hell did you do that?

'ENSHAW: Crikey! I bin workin' on this for years. Ain't left nothin' to chance. I got 'er. Never mind 'ow! But this chap Beni's got to be squared too. I don't mind tellin' you 'e's got the 'ole thing in 'is pocket. I got a pull over 'im, too, if it comes to that. But it takes me to fix it—see? And if you want to stay in on the ground floor of the biggest gold proposition since Western Australia—

MADDISON: Say, buddy, what's this stuff about Western Australia? Cut it right out! We'd buy and sell Western Australia before breakfast over on the goldfields in the States. Never mind about Australia. Come right down to this proposition here—

[*Ratu Beni reappears in the doorway.*]

RATU BENI: The Queen comes now.

[*Enshaw plucks off his hat, and Maddison rises and comes forward.*

*A magnificently handsome native woman in the prime of youth sweeps into the room in a highly coloured assortment of robes. On a European they would all be garish and wrong. On this striking savage their almost*

Muirhead Bone





## THE PRINCE CONSORT

grotesque combination of colours seems as inevitable as the plumage of a parrot. This is Ma'afi Litia Wailangilala, High Chiefess, Queen of Moturea, the niece of Ratu Beni. Having been educated at the Wesleyan Mission School at Suva, Fiji, she speaks excellent English, with the soft inflexion and slight tendency to slur the words common to educated Polynesians.

She is attended by a young girl, clad only in a kind of print wrapping, fastened under the arms, who, as soon as the Queen has seated herself, crouches on the floor beside her.

As the Queen enters, Ratu Beni, standing bolt upright by the door, utters the prescribed homage—"Ndua O!"

The two white men bow awkwardly.

The Queen seats herself on her throne.]

THE QUEEN: You can sit down, please.

[Enshaw and Maddison sit. Ratu Beni remains standing.]

RATU BENI: You lika to say something, Misi Henshaw?

'ENSHAW: That's right, Beni. [With easy familiarity]: Well, Queen, you know me—eh? I'm sure we're glad to see you lookin' so 'earty. This is Mister Baxter Maddison—you may 'ave 'eard of 'im. Big American chief! Big as me in England, eh? You know—Peritania!

THE QUEEN: I did not know you were so big in England, Misiter Henshaw.

'ENSHAW: Me? You know of Willie 'Enshaw, Queen! [Rather menacingly]: You know my 'otels in Sydney an' Auckland an' —Suva!

THE QUEEN: Well—I know. Yes.

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'ENSHAW: But I've got much bigger places in England. An' Mister Maddison 'ere—'e owns pretty near the 'ole of 'Onolulu. Is that right, Maddison?

MADDISON: Sure. I've gotten Noo York in my vest pocket.

RATU BENI: I think very good—you say what you want—eh?

'ENSHAW: Listen. I'll tell you, Queen. We got a plan, Mister Maddison and me, for financing a big trading venture right here in these islands. It will bring you plenty of money. Plenty plenty money. For you yourself.

THE QUEEN: Why you think I want you money?

'ENSHAW [*abashed*]: Well—don't everyone?

THE QUEEN: I don't know! Money all right Siteni—New Zealand. No good here! What for want money here? Plenty food! Very good life. Plenty of swim in the water and catch fish. In the mountains we got lot of pig and cattle. And uvi and kumalo and ndalo and plenty fruit——

'ENSHAW: Well—but I say. This is Socialism! Don't you want civilization? Nice clothes? Pretty presents? 'Ere, what's a boy to do if 'e wants to give 'is girl something? Give 'er a bunch of bananas?

THE QUEEN: I suppose he can give a kiss!

'ENSHAW: Well—but—well, you know best, Mum, I s'pose. But you must 'ave wireless an' gramophones an'—an' all that——

THE QUEEN: You going to sell wireless and gramophones?

'ENSHAW: Well, I'll tell you. We want to develop this country. Introduce capital. Put up a chain of ware'ouses all round the coast, centralize the management an' let your people 'ave things cheap——

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THE QUEEN: But I like do that myself.

MADDISON. What's that?

THE QUEEN: Yes. I make a plan first—with Misiter Lorimer, Missionary! Run my own stores for my people.

'ENSHAW: But you can't do that, Queen! That's state tradin'! You couldn't make a success of that. Nobody ever 'as done.

MADDISON: Say. Let's get down to brass tacks. This Syndicate, Madam—of which I am perhaps the principal member—is prepared to sink good dollars in your country. There's land here—and timber and that—quite undeveloped. Now let me tell you our proposition. There's a block of real estate up—shucks! [To Henshaw]: What's the name of the Gard-damned place?

'ENSHAW [*sulky*]: Kambara.

MADDISON: Sure, that's it. Up Kambara way.

THE QUEEN: Kambara. I know the place, of course. But that no good for plantation. That all rock! What you want that land for?

MADDISON [*glibly*]: Well—we kinder think it suitable for development. Maybe we're wrong, but that's our risk. I guess you ought to be better posted in the properties of the soil than we are. But anyway, we're in the market to deal on a big scale. The dollars are there. All we ask is full indefeasible title for all rights and purposes.

THE QUEEN [*coldly*]: I don't want to sell that land.

'ENSHAW [*delighted*]: 'Ave you said your little piece, Mr. Maddison? May I speak now?

MADDISON: Aw—hell! I thought you said you had things fixed!

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'ENSHAW: Well—one minute—Could I speak to you alone, Queen?

RATU BENI: Wha' for?

'ENSHAW: Well—Beni—I didn't ask you, did I? Look! You go and 'ave a talk to Mr. Maddison. [With a veiled menace, under his breath]: Look—you know Willie 'Enshaw—eh? You go an' do what I tell you!

RATU BENI [accepting the situation with a smile]: All ri'? You come, Misi Maddison? You seen the boys catch turtle in the fish-fence—swim on him back—eh?

MADDISON: Why, no!

RATU BENI: [buoyantly]: Come on. I show you. You like bottle of beer? You come my house.

[They go outside together.]

'ENSHAW: [pointing to the girl at the Queen's feet]: An' the kid too, your Majesty.

THE QUEEN [after a moment's pause]: Lako Yani. [The girl creeps out on all fours. A little pause.] Well—what you want to say to me?

'ENSHAW: Listen. We know each other, don't we? No good beatin' about the bush.

THE QUEEN: I know you—yes.

'ENSHAW: 'Course! I knew you'd be sensible. Those were good days in Suva when you used to sneak out of the Mission School at night and come down to my grog shop in All Nations Street. 'Oo was that Tongan kid used to come with you? Atouna, or some such name. You was always particular about your boys too, I must say!

THE QUEEN: Why are you talking about these things?

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'ENSHAW: Just remindin' you of the 'appy past!

THE QUEEN: Because you say all this does not mean it was happening.

'ENSHAW: Well—I might 'ave dreamt it all.

THE QUEEN: That is what you have done.

'ENSHAW: That is what I 'ave done if it's worth my while.

THE QUEEN: That is what you have done in any case. Nobody believes your word against mine. I just give an order and they put you on a boat and you go away. And perhaps someone give you a hiding first!

'ENSHAW: I 'ear they're talkin' about you gettin' married.

THE QUEEN: Yes? What you can do?

'ENSHAW: Forbid the banns!

THE QUEEN: Like hell you can! [Rising]: You come here with your damn lies. I call my guard.

'ENSHAW: Better not lose your temper. I've got the certificate.

[He shows a paper. She snatches at it. He avoids her]: Gently, gently!

THE QUEEN [panting]: It was a dirty trick! You know that. You help to do it. You give me that paper or true's God I make them kill you.

'ENSHAW: The paper's no good to you. I've got the man—

THE QUEEN: Henri!

'ENSHAW: That's 'im. Your French boy. The kid you were sweet on. [Ugly]: The one you got spliced to!

THE QUEEN [much moved]: Henri—here!

'ENSHAW: I tell you. I brought 'im with me. [She is silent. He attempts an awkward explanation.] Well— You can't blame other people. You done it yourself!

THE QUEEN: These white fools! What was the good to put

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me in a Mission school with a lot of half-castes? Do they think a chief. . . . And then punish me with all these common little children! That is not *vaka turanga*, Misiter Henshaw! And you say my fault!

'ENSHAW [*philosophically*]: Well, it doesn't really matter 'oose fault it is. The thing's 'appened now!

THE QUEEN: The thing happen! Yes. How? You make me *mateni*—drunk in you damn place. And then when Henri been with me—you say can make it all right. Marry!

'ENSHAW [*virtuously*]: I was lookin' after your interests, wasn't I? Protectin' your name!

THE QUEEN: What about my name now?

'ENSHAW: Look. It can all be arranged. 'E can disappear—if it's worth while!

THE QUEEN: But I don't want him disappear. I like to see him—perhaps. [*Suddenly bursting out*]: I sick of this place! Got to do what the Resident say, or Misiter Lorimer the missionary. No power. Can't do anything myself. Only talk! Look, Misiter Henshaw. You bring Henri. I go along Siteni—New Zealand—some place—Take my husband.

'ENSHAW: Can't do that. There'd be 'ell to pay. [*A thought suddenly striking him.*] If you want 'im so much, why not keep 'im here?

THE QUEEN: He is big chief in France—no?

'ENSHAW: 'Ell of a big chief, I should say. Always 'eard it said 'e was a prince or something by rights. You'd 'ave to arrange a new marriage, you know. Couldn't let on you'd been spliced on the quiet. 'Ave you out of 'ere quick, the Resident would, if 'e tumbled to that.

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THE QUEEN [*proudly*]: The Resident has no power to interfere in my household.

'ENSHAW [*earnestly*]: Look 'ere, Mum. Get that idea out of your 'ead quick. The Resident can 'ave you out of 'ere in two two's. They 'ad your uncle out in 1902, an' they'll 'ave you out if it suits them. You'd better let 'im disappear quiet.

THE QUEEN [*reflectively*]: I think perhaps I tell the Resident.

'ENSHAW [*much alarmed*]: Like 'ell you do! 'Ere, you play the game. Think I want the British Government 'avin' a down on me? This my reward for lookin' after your interests? Think of the quids you've 'ad out of me at my place in All Nations Street.

THE QUEEN [*interrupting*]: I always pay you back.

'ENSHAW: But I trusted you, didn't I? You want the Resident complainin' to the 'Igh Commissioner, an' gettin' my place shut up! [*Persuasively*]: Look, let's forget about this, an' act friendly. It's all above-board. Mister Maddison an' me'll take you in on our scheme and pay you a share on anything we make out of it. *Anything*, mind you—you'll remember that later on! If you go sneakin' to the Resident, you won't do yourself no good. 'E may out me, but 'e'll out you too. 'E'll tell the missionary. You know wot these missionaries are—

THE QUEEN: Where is Henri now?

'ENSHAW [*as impatiently as he dares*]: Oh, never mind about 'im. Wot we got to think about—

THE QUEEN: Where is Henri now?

'ENSHAW: I tell you I brought 'im with me. 'E's down at the store. We come over in the schooner from Tonga yesterday.

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THE QUEEN: I like to see. You go get him!

'ENSHAW [*arguing*]: But wot's the sense in that? Only goin' to pile up trouble.

THE QUEEN [*fiercely*]: I tell you I like to see him! You want some land, don't you? I got to turn off my people to let you have it. All right. I don't mind. You bring my husband you can have the land. But you bring him now.

'ENSHAW [*wringing his hands*]: I tell you it's no good. The British Government'll 'oof you out of the place. If you don't marry a chief from 'ere or Tonga or somewhere, your uncle'll raise 'ell. All your chiefs 'ere'll rise. You'll get kicked out.

THE QUEEN: You say he is a prince? Cannot a queen marry a prince from Europe?

'ENSHAW: But wot makes you think 'e's that sort of prince? I dunno about 'is bein' a prince.

THE QUEEN: No, but he tell me the same. That time in Suva. I know. He tell me. You go. You bring him here. [*He hesitates.*] If you want your land, you better go—

[*A voice in the side doorway: "May we come in?" The rush portière is swept aside, and two people enter. Lorimer the missionary, an elderly man, didactic and rather severe with white people, kindly in a sentimental fatherly way with the natives; and a middle-aged practical-looking Englishwoman, complete with camera and the paraphernalia of the tourist, Mrs. Hamilton Carter, traveller and journalist.]*

LORIMER: Oh—I hope we haven't disturbed you. [*Advancing to the Queen*]: I have brought a very distinguished writer to see you, Queen Ma'afi Litia—Mrs. Hamilton Carter—the Queen—

## THE PRINCE CONSORT

THE QUEEN [*with a dignified inclination of the head*]: *Vinaka na mbula*, Mrs. Hamilton Carter. I am very glad to see you.

[*'Enshaw fades into the background. Mrs. Hamilton Carter bows.*]

LORIMER [*expansively*]: Mrs. Carter is going to write a book about her experiences in the South Seas.

MRS. CARTER: Now what is exactly the right way to address your Majesty? I always like to get the customs of the country exactly right. When I was in the desert—Arabia, you know, and all that—I always insisted on giving the sheiks their full proper titles. Always. They loved me for it. Now what do I call you? Not Your Majesty, of course. There's some native equivalent, isn't there?

LORIMER: Her people call her Marama Levu. That means "great lady." [*With a genuine affection that robs the words of their patronism*]: We call her Litia—because we baptized her, and brought her up, and taught her to be a good girl.

[*The Queen's change of countenance is lost upon their self-complacency.*]

MRS. CARTER: Oh, but I shall call her—what was it?—Marama something—of course!

LORIMER: Marama Levu.

MRS. CARTER: Marama Levu. How do you do, Marama Levu? No, that's not right, because I haven't got the native greeting—I must get that right for my book, you know.

LORIMER: You should say what she said to you: *Vinaka na mbula*. That means "Good health to you."

MRS. CARTER [*making a tolerable shot at the pronunciation*]: *Vinaka na mbula*—there!

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

THE QUEEN: Please, will you sit down?

MRS. CARTER: Thank you, but would you mind if I took a photograph? [Unslinging her camera.]

THE QUEEN [graciously]: If you like, certainly.

LORIMER [observing 'Enshaw for the first time]: Oh, and who's this?

'ENSHAW [sullen and defiant]: 'Enshaw's my name.

LORIMER [puzzled]: Enshaw?

'ENSHAW [bridling]: No, not Enshaw, 'Enshaw!

LORIMER: Oh, Henshaw. I see. You're visiting the Queen?

'ENSHAW: Well, so are you. It's no business of yours.

LORIMER [in his character of statesman-priest]: Perhaps you don't realize that I am one of her Majesty's principal advisers. Your business, whatever it may be, will come to me for consideration. Don't you think, therefore—

THE QUEEN [with just a trace of anxiety in her voice—she is a little afraid of the missionary]: You can go, Misiter Henshaw. You go and do what I say. Now! Quick!

'ENSHAW: 'Adn't I better wait for Maddison?

THE QUEEN [imperiously]: You damn quick—hurry up!

'ENSHAW [taken aback]: Oh, certainly.

MRS. CARTER [anxiously]: Don't move, Marama—Your Majesty. A wonderful pose. Just a second. [The click of the camera.] Thanks so much.

[Enshaw takes advantage of the diversion to make himself scarce, going out through the main door.]

THE QUEEN [politely, to Mrs. Carter]: This is the first time you come to South Sea island?

## THE PRINCE CONSORT

MRS. CARTER: Oh, no, your Majesty—oh, there, I've got it wrong again—Marama Levu. I'm an old campaigner. [*Winding up her film, and recording the title of the picture with the autographic pencil. She speaks aloud as she does so.*] Moturea, June 7th, the Marama Levu on her throne—I must have it right for the book, you see. [*Resuming the conversation*]: No. I've been all through the islands. I think the South Sea peoples are very interesting. Most interesting. An old heliolithic culture, you know! Quite unlike anyone else—except, of course, the people of Madagascar. You haven't been to Madagascar, Marama Levu?

THE QUEEN: No. I never gone anywhere. Only Fiji, to school.

MRS. CARTER: Ah, you've got the joys of travel before you. I expect you'll think England and Europe just as strange and wonderful as we Europeans think your beautiful Pacific Islands.

LORIMER [*not to be left out of it*]: The—hum—ha—races of Polynesia are among the most favoured of God's peoples. They are not always mindful of their blessings, but on the whole—

MRS. CARTER: Should you say that the white influence was always a blessing, Mr. Lorimer?

LORIMER: I was not speaking of the white influence so much as the influence of the hum—ha— Church. In the early days the—ah—white influence was by no means salutary.

MRS. CARTER: I once spent several months in New Caledonia. It hardly struck me that the French penal settlement there was an unmixed blessing to the natives.

LORIMER [*loftily*]: But Mrs. Hamilton Carter, that is not same thing at all! That is Melanesia. We are in Polynesia. The Wesleyan Church has practically *no* foothold in Melanesia. That is the province of the Church of England!

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

MRS. CARTER: I wasn't criticizing Church administration, but the terrible influence of the convicts upon the natives. So many of them on release take up with native women, and drag the poor things down to their own degraded level, and, of course, the children are half-castes.

THE QUEEN: Half-castes—ugh—no good. I don't like half-castes.

MRS. CARTER: No. They're nobody's children.

LORIMER [*reproachfully*]: But they *are* children—and they have a Father in Heaven!

MRS. CARTER: You're bound to say that, of course, Mr. Lorimer. But if you can judge by their habits, poor creatures, you'd think them more intimately connected with another place. Dear me! They're very naughty sometimes. So promiscuous and er—in fact, really hardly decent sometimes! And sometimes quite, quite handsome and attractive. I remember one boy in particular. The half-caste son of a very well-connected man. A murderer, I think he was, or something—perhaps it was vitriol throwing. French criminals are so very—criminal—aren't they? Anyhow, this man was eventually made executioner. I suppose it was his way of showing repentance. But his son did terrible things with women. He had at least three wives—and I think he married another not long ago. [*The others have long ago lost all but the politest semblance of interest. She realizes her error and switches off the conversation.*] Dear me—what were we talking about? [*To the Queen, as one talks down to a child*]: And do you take an interest in gardening?

THE QUEEN [*sulky*]: No, I don't like.

MRS. CARTER: You ought to make yourself. Try English roses.

## THE PRINCE CONSORT

They grow beautifully in the tropics. You must let me send you some when I get back home again. Oh yes, and hydrangeas, too.

[*Ratu Beni swaggers in through the main door, alone.*]

LORIMER [*immediately becoming the showman*]: Now this fine old savage is really worth your attention. Ratu Beni Matanitombua, Mrs. Hamilton Carter. [*Explaining to Beni*]: Lady come from Peritania.

RATU BENI: Oh, yes. [*Smiling and bowing.*] 'Ow do you do? Very well thank you.

LORIMER: You must take a photograph of him.

MRS. CARTER: I will, I will. [*She prepares the camera.*]

LORIMER [*explaining*]: By and by she put you in a book. [*To Mrs. Carter*]: Ratu Beni hasn't got much to thank the whites for, let me tell you. The "blackbirders" kidnapped him when he was a lad of fourteen, and sold him as a labourer on the plantations in Fiji. A king's son, mind you. *Sa ndina*—eh, Beni?

RATU BENI: *Sa ndina*, Misi Lorimer—yes, quite true. But I settle for that when we catch a boat's crew come ashore for water. Kill 'em!

MRS. CARTER [*over the top of the camera*]: Gracious! Just turn your head a little this way. That's right. [*The click of the camera. She proceeds to wind up the spool.*]

LORIMER: There's quite a lot of the old Adam in our friend Ratu Beni. He's a reformed character now. We've made a Christian of him. He takes the plate round on Sundays, don't you, Beni? But there was a time when he preferred long-pig

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

to *bulломиkau*. Long-pig is human flesh, you know, and *bulломиkau* is butcher's meat.

MRS. CARTER: What an interesting man! [*To Beni*]: Now you must tell me exactly how you did it. The cannibal feasts, I mean.

RATU BENI: All ri'. I show you. Suppoti some man he make bad for you.

MRS. CARTER: Well—what, for example?

THE QUEEN: If he make you a dirty trick—

RATU BENI: Perhaps insult you.

THE QUEEN: Perhaps he steal you sister.

LORIMER: Anything of that sort.

MRS. CARTER: I see. Go on.

RATU BENI: This man he going to kill—eh? The Chief he call his brother or somebody he say you bring this feller. I go kill. I go eat 'im. Then his brother or someone he black he face like for *meke-meke*—war dance. He dress up. He go get the man. He say Chief like you too much. You come along see the Chief, and he take the man go along talk to him very nice. Then he come Chief. Chief he say I like you too much. You like me give you house. You like me give you land. Mean to say dig a big oven kill and cook him. [*Laughing heartily.*] That the house and land. Good joke, eh? Man he very fright. He say "I got house. I got land. I no want. I like go home my family." Chief he laugh. He say "All ri'. I send you home. Very good you go home. Then he put he hand on he head—lika this [*acting it*] signal to he brother or someone. He come up behind lika this [*acting it*] Bonk! Man he dead. Gone home—eh? Everybody shout and laugh. Drag away. *Kai kai*. Very good!

## THE PRINCE CONSORT

MRS. CARTER: It's too marvellous! Will you tell me again to-morrow so that I can write it all down? And I wish you'd let me take a photograph. Would you put on the dress?

RATU BENI: All ri'. You come to-night. I bring my war club. I show.

[*Darkness begins to fall rapidly*]

MRS. CARTER: But I can't photograph you at night. Oh, I know. I'll make a sketch. May I? That would be marvellous. Mr. Lorimer, will you come and get my sketching-block with me?

LORIMER: Surely.

MRS. CARTER: Ask him to put on the dress.

LORIMER [*as they go*]: He will. He'll be delighted to dress up. They're just like children, you know.

RATU BENI: I think he good man that woman! Eh—you think?

THE QUEEN [*bursting out*]: I hate her! I hate them—all the whites! They come and look at us all a same pig! What we get from the white man? They come and settle on our land and take it away from us. They treat us always like children. We are no good to them. Who ask the white man to come and make us copy him? They spoil this place for me. If they want to come, interfere, take away my power, all right then, pay me and let me go. Better I stop Australia, New Zealand, England, perhaps. There I can be all a same as white man! Here, my own country, white man always the chief, make me do what he say.

RATU BENI [*soothing her*]: I think you foolish.

THE QUEEN: Foolish? You listen. I tell you something. That

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

time I stop at school in Suva—— [*She pauses and changes her mind.*]

RATU BENI [*sternly*]: Well, what you do?

THE QUEEN: Never mind to you. Listen. You go. Put you dress for *meke-meke*. I like you dance for me.

RATU BENI [*good-naturedly*]: *Savinaka!* All ri'. I go my house —make ready.

[*He turns and goes out. The Queen remains sitting in solitary state. Suddenly she calls.*]

THE QUEEN: *He Koiko!* [*The girl attendant crawls in.*] Make a light!

[*The girl kindles a lamp. While she is doing so the Queen suddenly leaves her throne and goes within. When the lamp is kindled the attendant follows. Silence. The empty stage. Sound of voices approaching. 'Enshaw enters with another man—a dark-skinned, handsome fellow—Henri.*]

HENRI: I raza not do this, you know!

'ENSHAW [*fiercely*]: Gawd—don't you start arguin'! I've 'ad enough of that. Do you think I've bin payin' you good money to 'ave you backin' out when the time comes?

HENRI: But listen! I cannot stay here. That was not the bargain! I agree to come wiz you—to be *en arrière*. That was entirely different!

'ENSHAW: Now look 'ere. There's a good money in this. I'm not goin' to 'ave it go west for your damned squeamishness. You've got to play up to the girl. She's all right, isn't she? You can make a run for it when we're settled down and workin'.

## THE PRINCE CONSORT

You got to see it through. Damn it, isn't a gold-mine worth a bit of—

HENRI: *Oui. Mais tout de même.* I don't want trouble. *C'est difficile pour moi.* I don't want a—

'ENSHAW [warningly]: S'sh!

[*Mrs. Carter has entered unceremoniously.*]

MRS. CARTER: Oh, did I leave my camera? Yes, here it is.

[*Observing the two men*]: Now that's very interesting. [*To 'Enshaw*]:

You're a beachcomber, aren't you?

'ENSHAW: No, I am not. Never 'eard of such a thing—I'm an Island produce merchant.

MRS. CARTER: Oh, well, I always like to make friends with the locals. And your friend here? [*To Henri*]: But I've seen you before.

HENRI: *Jamais!*

MRS. CARTER: Oh, yes, I have. I never forget faces. You used to be in Noumea—the French penal settlement. I remember perfectly.

HENRI [shouting]: I tell you nevaire!

MRS. CARTER: Well, dear me, you mustn't shout! Wasn't your father the man they called the Prince?

HENRI: Well—suppose he was?

MRS. CARTER: Well—that's just what I say. [*The Queen enters. She is in island négligé. Mrs. Carter turns to her at once.*] Oh, now, isn't this too interesting. That interesting half-caste I told you about. The son of the executioner murderer. [*Triumphantly*]: Here he is! Well, the world's a small place!

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

THE QUEEN [*disregarding*]: You want to see me?

MRS. CARTER [*abashed*]: Oh, no. I hope I'm not intruding.  
I came back for my camera. Yes. [*Backing towards the door. She disappears discomfited.*]

THE QUEEN: You can go, Misiter Henshaw.

'ENSHAW: Well—I was going to suggest—

THE QUEEN: You can go, please.

'ENSHAW: That's what I was goin' to suggest. [*To Henri*]: I'll 'ang about outside.

[*Henri nods. 'Enshaw departs.*]

HENRI: Ma'afi, you don't pay attention to what that woman says.

THE QUEEN: So—you come back to me—my husband.

HENRI [*awkwardly*]: *Je suis très heureux de vous revoir, Madame!*

THE QUEEN: Still in French? Well—as you please. What have you to say to me?

HENRI [*haltingly*]: Infinitely to express—my regret—that we have been—kept apart.

THE QUEEN: It was, of course, unavoidable?

HENRI: Naturally, Madame.

THE QUEEN: Is that how you call your wife?

HENRI: *Madame—je vous prie.* Please do not make this all so difficult. It is not—vair easy to explain. Perhaps if I tell you——

THE QUEEN: Explain! What is there to explain now that we are together?

HENRI [*growing easier*]: No. There is nothing to explain. I sought per'aps you may be sinking that per'aps I ought to write—or send some message. But you see——

## THE PRINCE CONSORT

THE QUEEN: But you have come to me now—so I suppose—that our separation—is finish?

HENRI: *Sans doute! Sans doute!*

THE QUEEN: Are you not very please to find that your wife is a Queen?

HENRI: Very proud, Madame.

THE QUEEN: And so you are a Prince—Big Chief!

HENRI: Only by descent. I have no position. My father had no position. My ancestor was made a Prince of the Empire by Napoleon.

THE QUEEN: And so his descendant is also a Prince?

HENRI: I suppose.

THE QUEEN: And therefore the proper husband for a Queen. But he may be married?

HENRI: To you.

THE QUEEN: He may be married to a half-caste—or a white woman. Perhaps two or three—and then perhaps the Queen can punish!

HENRI [*responding to her beauty*]: Ma'afi—you are lovely—adorable! *Tu es ravissante!* Always I am thinking of you. It is not my wish or my fault that we never see one another for so long—

THE QUEEN: Ah! But are you not forgetting the other women?

HENRI: You do not wish me here. I go away.

THE QUEEN: No, wait. Wait a little while.

HENRI. *Alors, embrasse moi donc.* Kiss me, Ma'afi. Come, my love.

THE QUEEN [*gently extricating herself from his arms*]: A little

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

patience. Since we wait two years we can wait five minutes.  
We must talk to my uncle.

HENRI [alarmed]: Uncle? What is this!

THE QUEEN: In a moment. He put on his dress. He comes to  
dance for our wedding.

HENRI [relieved]: Oh—our wedding—yes.

THE QUEEN: Tell me, why you marry the Queen?

HENRI [muttering]: *C'était l'amour.* I don't know.

THE QUEEN: *L'amour!* The love—love of me—

HENRI: *Naturellement*—

THE QUEEN: Or love of money?

HENRI: What you mean?

THE QUEEN: How much Henshaw give you?

HENRI: *Je ne comprend pas.* Do you wish to insult me? I shall go.  
No. I refuse to stay.

[He turns to go out, but recoils. Ratu Beni, with blackened face and native dress, stands in the doorway. Henri chokes back a little scream of dismay. Beni smiles and advances jovially. He is carrying his war club.]

RATU BENI [with seeming joviality]: *Vinaka na mbula.* Very well,  
thank you? You no want go away. You stay a little, please!

THE QUEEN: Come and sit here with me—Prince.

RATU BENI: You Prince—eh? *Vinaka na mbula,* Prince.

[Henri looks from one to the other. A little choke of terror escapes from his throat.]

THE QUEEN: You are a Prince, yes?

HENRI: Yes.

## THE PRINCE CONSORT

THE QUEEN: Not a half-caste? [A dreadful silence.] Not a liar? Not the man who make a fool of the Queen? A half-caste—from Noumea. The son of a convict—but, of course, that is half white and so it is too good for Moturea girl. Too good for the Queen? Eh? You tell me, please—half-caste!

HENRI [*crumpling up*]: Well. Is not my fault. Not my fault my father send to Noumea. I can't help to be a half-caste. My father big chief!

THE QUEEN: Not your fault you tell lie to Moturea girl? Make the Queen a fool! Not your fault you all same white man? Empty heart! Lying tongue! You do it for money—eh? [*Henri looks from one to the other, licking his lips and trying to find courage. The Queen resumes.*] You like money, eh? You like me give you house? Give you land?

[*Henri looks up with dawning hope. Ratu Beni, understanding better, drops behind him with club in readiness.*]

HENRI: Ma'afi—je suis très mécontent de vous avoir faché. I very sorry. I don't want you give me anything. I go.

THE QUEEN [*frozenly*]: You like better go home? All right. [*Forcing a laugh.*] You go home!

[*He turns in the doorway. Beni, raising his club, turns his eye on the Queen. Slowly her hand comes up to her head in the signal. Just as Henri reaches the doorway it is completed. Beni leaps forward and the club falls. A terrible shriek from Henri, followed by the old-time war-yell from Beni. Then a peal of maniacal laughter. The Queen looks on immobile.*]

## BRITISH LEGION BOOK

'ENSHAW [*rushing in*]: 'Oo was that called out? 'Ere, Christ! What you done? Ere, can't yer get 'im out of the way? There'll be 'ell over this!

[*Hurried footsteps at the side door.*]

MRS. CARTER [*entering with Lorimer*]: Well—are we ready for the dance?

THE QUEEN: The dance is finish! [*She turns on her heel and walks regally into her private apartment.*]

*The End of the Play*











